SOVIET WOMEN TODAY **DOROTHY ATKINSON**

THE
NATION

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LABOR 1975

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B.J. WIDICK

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EDWARD SADLOWSKI

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EDITORIALS

Nostalgia and Fatigue

The political fatigue that besets both major parties has brought on a mood of nostalgia, of which the current Truman mania is a striking illustration. President Ford is consciously trying to cast himself in the role of a Republican Truman. But he is actually a throwback to the politics of Calvin Coolidge who was convinced, as were most Americans of the mid-1920s, that the business of government is business. Coolidge seemed a relief after Teapot Dome and Warren Harding, and so Ford is a relief after Watergate and Richard Nixon. The difference is that Ford is an active partisan of big-business policies whereas Coolidge supported them with no visible sign of enthusiasm. Coolidge was taciturn, withdrawn and "silent"; he seldom smiled and slapped few backs. Ford is gregarious, smiles often and has an easygoing manner. Just as people were told to keep cool with Coolidge, so now they are urged to stay bored with Ford.

The nostalgic mood probably accounts for the sudden spurt of interest in, of all possible Democratic nominees, Hubert H. Humphrey, whose name stirs memories of the FEPC squabble at the Baltimore convention of 1948 and the "liberal anti-communism" of the sainted Truman. To some commentators, the talk about Humphrey is incredible. "Shake me, pinch me, kick me," writes an agitated Larry L. King in *New Times*, "anything to wake me from this terrible nightmare." But it is not a nightmare; there is nothing frightening about Humphrey except his mediocrity. Everyone knows all there is to know about him; there are no mysteries, no unreported secrets, no buried scandals. He is perhaps the best-known and most familiar American politician now in active practice. King refers to him accurately, if harshly, as "a worn-out old retread," but he is a familiar figure and therefore reassuring in a troubled time. He is glib, emotional, a tireless and tiresome speaker, a master of the clichés of welfare liberalism, kindly, likable, friendly as a puppy, agile and a trimmer. He supported the war in Vietnam until it became fashionable to oppose it. He went along with the McCarran Act and the "liberal anti-communism" which the Democrats used to defend themselves against the reckless charges of Joe McCarthy. There is no malice in Humphrey and no guile. He is not a militant reformer; in fact he is very much an old-style politician: his name appears on nearly every list of illegal campaign contributions. There is nothing about him to frighten a middle class measurably upset and disturbed by what is happening in the country. This is, in fact, precisely his strength; he is reassuring, he is friendly. He is out of a past still close enough to stir vivid memories. And he has a constituency; it may be stagnant, a bit on the elderly side, suffering from fright and fatigue, but it is substantial. He has many friends among the leaders of organized labor, farm groups and small business and he is remembered in a kindly way by many blacks. Nixon, another opportunist, rose from the ashes of his California defeat in 1962 to win the Presidency, so Humphrey has reason to think that he just might make it in 1976 despite his trouncing in 1968. He is full of bounce and energy and will promise nearly anything to win the nomination.

This has been called "the Coolidge summer" and it has had that quality. It has been the summer of the long vacation and the giant yawn. Garbage collects in the streets of New York City and pedestrians make dainty detours without appearing to notice it. Prices soar and consumers tell TV newsmen that they don't like it, but so what. Protests have been suspended along with marches, mass meetings, petition drives and strikes. A great city faces bankruptcy and its residents act as though it were no concern of theirs. "Nostalgia," writes Thomas Griffith in *Time*, "flowers naturally in worried times, which makes other eras seem better." But today's nostalgia is also a byproduct of fatigue brought on by the war in Vietnam, Watergate, and deep concern over the domestic economy. It has also been stimulated by the dreariness of national politics. The newest of newcomers, Gov. Jerry Brown, captures nationwide attention, not because he has advanced new programs or ideas but because his rhetoric is fresh, his face is new and his political style is different. Since there is no "new" politics, new political styles are attractive. The opposite side of this coin is nostalgia, the retreat to a past which is long gone but still remembered. But after Coolidge, remember, came first Hoover and then Roosevelt; Coolidge was sitting on a volcano which did not erupt until after he left office. *Time* (September 1) quotes Thomas Corcoran about those times and ours. "Whenever," he said, "this town (Washington) loses positive direction, it means something is struggling to be born in the nation—there is a wind coming." People are frightened, angry, annoyed, disgusted, distrustful and eager for a new leadership, but because none has appeared, they seek reassurance in nostalgic reveries and playbacks of the politics of yesteryear.

S.1: Tyranny Codified

While democratic-minded Americans are trying to focus Bicentennial nostalgia on the revolutionary spirit of the war against George III, Senators McClellan and Hruska and an unlikely coalition of conservatives and liberals have been quietly preparing their own anniversary gift for the American people. Not 1776 but 1798, the year a Federalist-dominated Congress passed the notorious Alien and Sedition Acts, seems to be their 18th-century touchstone. Under the guise of rationalizing the disorganized and sometimes contradictory body of federal criminal law, they have been assembling S.1 , a 753-page measure which contains an attack on American civil liberties that would not only make future disclosures of the Pentagon Papers genre illegal but would, if a spirit of 1960s-like rebellion ever returns, make potential felons out of those who try to change the established order in any but the most minimal ways.

Media attention quite naturally has highlighted the monster bill's provisions that would give the United States its first official secrets act, allowing the government complete control over what its citizens know about its workings and making investigative reporting extraordinarily difficult and legally hazardous. Bureaucrats or politicians who leak classified or "national defense information," as defined by the government, could be sentenced to seven years in the

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penitentiary *in peacetime.* Reporters and publishers who pass the information on to anyone, including their readers, would face similar penalties. Improper classification would be no certain defense. Intent to harm the country would no longer have to be proven. Sources, reporters and publishers who transmit hidden information about military plans and boondoggles that foreigners might read and use "against the interests of the United States or to the advantage of a foreign power" could be charged with espionage.

The bill has its historical roots in a sincere and salutary attempt by a Johnson-appointed commission to organize and simplify federal criminal law. The commission recommended reforms in 1971 that were "generally acceptable" to the ACLU but apparently repellent to Attorneys General Mitchell and Kleindienst. With McClellan's help, the Nixon administration then drafted its own version which, after years of Congressional wrangling, has been substantially reincarnated as S.1. Among the bill's sponsors are Senators Mansfield, Moss and Bayh, whose initial support—especially in Mansfield's case—might charitably be attributed to their failure to read the bill. As a potentially leading contender for left-wing support for his Presidential bid next year, Bayh has been the object of substantial and pointed criticism for his co-sponsorship.

Though apparently still an S.1 co-sponsor, Bayh has recently made good his promise to try to amend the bill where he found it objectionable. Among other things he is trying to substitute for the vague, omnibus official secrets provisions a clear amendment making it a crime to give classified information to a foreign power with intent to injure the United States. Also illegal would be disclosure or publication of classified codes, war plans, weapons systems or atomic secrets, but only if disclosure would pose "direct, immediate and irreparable harm to the security of the United States"—just what the Supreme Court offered as criteria in the Pentagon Papers decision.

But the secrets aspect of S.1 is just part—though perhaps the most important part—of a bill that contains at least a score of other dangerous provisions:

—The Smith Act would in part be resurrected by a provision outlawing the "incitement" of others to engage in conduct "that then *or at some future time* would facilitate" the destruction of the government. Membership in an instigating group would be grounds for arrest.

—Domestic wiretapping would be reaffirmed and government bugging authority for up to forty-eight hours without court order broadened. Landlords and telephone companies would be required to cooperate "forthwith" and "unobtrusively" with taps and electronic surveillance.

—Sabotage would be defined as activity that "damages" or "tampers with" almost any property, facility or service that is or might be used by the military if the intent was "to interfere with or obstruct the ability of the United States or an associate nation"—like South Korea—"to prepare for or engage in war or defense activities." The penalty: up to twenty or thirty years and a $100,000 fine in some cases, up to life imprisonment or death in others.

—Peaceful demonstrations generally would be made legally hazardous with various restrictions placed on rights, including that of demonstrating adjacent to whatever the government says is a "temporary residence" of a President. Also outlawed would be massive demonstrations that by

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their size alone interfere with traffic or by their noise alone interfere with government operations. Picketing of government buildings could also become illegal. Planning by phone or mail or traveling interstate to assemble five or more persons who "create a grave danger" to property would be forbidden.

—Limited "use" immunity in criminal proceedings and Congressional hearings would be permitted—effectively throwing out the Fifth Amendment and allowing indeterminate jail sentences for those who invoke it. Contempt of Congress penalties would be increased to a maximum of three years and a $100,000 fine.

—Routine entrapment by government agents would be legally condoned. Defendants would have to prove "unlawful entrapment" to escape conviction—a difficult task since "deception," providing "a facility or an opportunity," and "active inducement" would all be allowed.

—Victimless crimes would be punished more harshly. The Supreme Court's 1973 obscenity ruling would be codified; anyone disseminating material describing sexual intercourse or showing nudity could be prosecuted.

There is more; it goes on for 753 pages. If enacted as it stands, S.1 would put this country on the way to becoming a police state. By comparison with its provisions, the CIA's domestic spying seems but the isolated overzealousness its apologists claim. Given media concern about First Amendment implications, it seems likely that some of the provisions will be dropped. Actually the measure should be held up pending a thorough reconsideration. A good case can doubtless be made for the simplification and recodification of the federal criminal law, but in its present form the measure constitutes a dangerous threat to civil liberties.

The Libel Gag

The Texas Observer, of Austin, is distributing an appeal written on its behalf by I.F. Stone, David Halberstam and others. The magazine, which for twenty years has kept a liberal and sophisticated eye on events in a state not always celebrated for either liberalism or sophistication, today faces legal costs which may well put it out of business. It seems that late in 1973 the state of Texas undertook to close three child-care facilities which it found did not meet its licensing requirements. These homes were operated by Lester Roloff, a fundamentalist preacher of Corpus Christi, through his company, Roloff Evangelistic Enterprises, Inc., and a trial court found Roloff guilty of contempt in connection with the closing order. However, the state Supreme Court overturned the conviction on the ground that the licensing regulations applied only to homes caring for children younger than 16.

The Observer, along with *The Houston Post*, *New Times*, the *Chicago Daily News* and NBC-TV, publicized Mr. Roloff's difficulties and he is now suing them, and sundry individuals, for $5 million. Ronnie Dugger, publisher of *The Observer*, foresees no difficulty in defending successfully against the suit, but he now faces the problem of spending many thousands of dollars which his low-budget magazine does not have for legal and court expenses. *The Observer* carries libel insurance, but it covers only actual damages and will pay nothing toward costs. Libel suits are the other side of free speech; if one believes in the latter, one must acknowledge the need for the former. But the practice, which appears to be growing, of bringing suits for enormous sums on grounds so shaky that they are often thrown out of court, but which nevertheless put the defendants to crippling expenses, is itself a way to attack free speech. Mr. Roloff's Evangelistic Enterprises can no doubt well afford to bring the suit; it probably won't win its case, but it will have the satisfaction of punishing organizations and individuals whom it dislikes. The most vulnerable immediate target of the evangelist's wrath is *The Observer*, but the public at large has a vested interest in defending itself from the consequences of censorship by libel suit. Contributions can be sent to *The Texas Observer* Legal Defense Fund, 600 West 7th Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

'The Corporate Crime Wave'

Disclosures of large bribes paid by U.S. corporations to foreign officials and political parties in pursuit of lucrative arms contracts, along with massive illegal corporate campaign contributions in domestic politics, constitute, in the judgment of Ray Garrett Jr. of the SEC, "the second half of Watergate, and by far the largest half." As these disclosures have seeped into the press—they have not generally been headlined nor have the networks made much of them—numerous symposia have been held on the ethics of business executives, or the lack thereof. These symposia indicate the existence of a state of mind which is itself part of the problem. A fairly typical response from a business executive is the statement of the chairman of Ashland Oil: "I felt I was doing what was being done generally," which is perhaps the oldest and stalest alibi for conduct known to be improper. Experts on ethics have referred to "ambiguities," pleaded lack of knowledge of concrete situations, and failed to offer practical guidelines. Some business executives pay lip service to the need for a new business ethic and speak of a shift in moral attitudes in the business community since Watergate, but it is worth noting that stockholders have voiced little criticism of improper corporate actions. Still more significant is the fact that officials convicted of making illegal campaign contributions have received only nominal fines, and all of them have been retained in their posts with no loss of status, perquisites or prestige. Payments of overseas bribes have gone unpunished in part because of the lack of a relevant statute, although it should be noted that most of these payments were concealed in corporate records and not reported to government agencies. Nor has this pattern of corrupt conduct been strongly condemned in Congress or the press; the President has apparently yet to hear of it.

To place the overseas bribes in proper perspective, suppose that the French were to design a marvelous new fighter plane which our Air Force thought it had to have immediately. Suppose it then became known that the makers of the plane had paid large sums to Pentagon officials and certain members of Congress and had also made contributions to both major parties and "gifts" to the press. Our ethical experts would see nothing "ambiguous" about such a scandal. Yet by way of justification the French could say that they were only doing what seemed to

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be the custom here and what numerous U.S. corporations had admitted doing overseas. Predictably there would be a great hue and cry. We would insist that the bribe takers be prosecuted and efforts be made to cancel the contract or impose penalties, or perhaps break off relations with the French Government if French officials were involved in the scandal. Yet Lockheed, which has paid out $22 million to foreign officials and political parties and is the beneficiary of huge government loans, refuses to disclose the names of the foreign officials to whom payments have been made and stoutly defends the practice. Government officials condemn the payments—which were of course concealed—but have not seriously challenged such practices.

What this strange state of affairs suggests is the need—at least as a short-term expedient—for some such approach as that proposed by Ralph Nader, Sen. Lee Metcalf, and Representatives Rosenthal, Moffett and Downey, who want the Attorney General to set up a division on corporate crime within the Justice Department to handle the specific job of investigating and prosecuting business crime, from mail fraud to bribes. They think such action might show that "the government means business with business." The idea has merit but a much larger issue is involved. It is not "the corporate crime wave" *per se* that should command attention—although it is important—nor is the issue of business ethics one of great urgency. What we face is a major constitutional issue which has been growing in importance for decades: how to control—how to govern—the large corporation, particularly the multinational corporation. Although we have talked for years about the problem of making the American corporation socially responsible, nothing much has been done about it. As Nader and his associates point out, "when pillars of respect become pillagers of the community," then the ability of government to govern is challenged. The issues involved, brilliantly discussed in Christopher Stone's new book: *Where the Law Ends: The Social Control of Corporate Behavior* (see also his article in *The Nation,* August 2nd) should command the highest priority, but at the moment are far down on the agenda for political action.

Hoffa and the Teamsters

The disappearance on July 30 of Jimmy Hoffa underscores once again the importance of a thoroughgoing investigation of the Teamster pension fund setup. The mystery of his disappearance may never be settled, but the circumstances indicate some connection with the fund and its manipulation. Up to this point, the burden of investigation has fallen on two publications: the maverick truckers' magazine *Overdrive* and *The Wall Street Journal.* These publications have produced detailed exposés of the shady manipulation of the union's estimated $4 billion in pension funds. Particular attention has been focused on the $1.3 billion Central States, Southeast and Southwest Areas pension fund, headquartered in Chicago. According to Jonathan Kwitny's report, *Journal* auditors found that the Chicago fund "has plowed hundreds of millions of dollars into loans that were, at best, unwise. Some of them apparently involved fraud." Some of the loans were of interest to the Mafia. Nicholas Fraser reports in the *New Statesman*: "The mob built hotels, health spas, casinos, bowling alleys and cemeteries with Teamsters' money. Sometimes the loans have been so transparently risky and ill-secured that it has been surmised that the Teamsters intended the loans to go bad. . . ."

In his rise to power Hoffa no doubt had ties with the Mafia, but the evidence indicates that under Frank Fitzsimmons the gangsters have enjoyed some of their best years. The Chicago fund, reports *Time*, has been "nothing less than a lending agency for the mob." Jim Drinkhall reported in *Overdrive* in 1973 that a $1.4 million loan supposedly made to a New Mexico plastics factory, actually was used to finance the Chicago Mafia's purchase of wiretapping equipment. This article led to a federal investigation and, ultimately, an indictment against a Chicago bail bondsman with Mafia ties. But before the case went to trial, the government's star witness was shotgunned to death and the bail bondsman was acquitted.

The evidence also indicates that Mafia manipulation of the fund has been costly to union members. Though their pensions nationally run as high as $550 a month after twenty years' service, the lack of profitability of the Chicago-administered funds has led many union members to question just how much more of their employers' $22-a-week contributions they would receive if the funds were honestly administered.

There is reason to believe that Hoffa intended to stage a comeback in the union. He had made a settlement of his pension claim, in the amount of $1.7 million or thereabouts, which would indicate that initially he intended to retire. But recently he claimed that he had been double-crossed when his release from prison was secured. Whether true or not, the circumstances of his release had interesting political overtones. Nixon needed help from the Teamsters so he could claim some support in labor. His special agent, Charles Colson, who turned up as counsel for the Teamsters, worked out the arrangements by which Hoffa would be released (the rank and file would like that), but would not be allowed to participate in union affairs until 1980; the Teamsters made a substantial contribution to Nixon's campaign fund. But after his release Hoffa began to get restless. He formed what was described as a prison reform organization and went around the country speaking on the need for prison reform; this gave him a chance to speak to key union members. He also contended that the application he had signed said nothing about refraining from union activity until 1980, and carried a date different from the one Nixon had signed containing this restriction. He had retained Leonard Boudin in an effort to lift the restriction and had given indications that he might run against Fitzsimmons in 1976 if the court action was successful.

There are gaps in this chain of circumstances but enough has been established, not by government agencies which seem to have been quite reluctant to inquire into the operations of the pension fund but by some diligent investigative reporting, to underscore the need for a thorough federal investigation, preferably by the Justice Department. Given the cozy relationship which existed between Colson, Nixon and Fitzsimmons, the Ford administration is under a special obligation to press such an investigation between now and the 1976 election.

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SOVIET WOMEN TODAY

DOROTHY ATKINSON

Stanford, Calif.

"Equal rights for women?" The smiles of my hostesses at the Moscow office of the Soviet Women's Committee broadened with amusement. Discussing with them plans for a Stanford University conference on "Women in Russia," I had referred to Western interest in women's issues and had asked if the Soviet Women's Committee dealt with these matters in the USSR. Patiently, as the tea glasses were refilled, the women explained what they clearly felt should have been obvious to a visiting historian: the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution had brought equal rights to Soviet women, and therefore the historical "woman question" had long ago found its answer in the Soviet Union. Since there was no sex discrimination, the Soviet Women's Committee, the largest and most powerful organization of women in the country, had no need to concern itself with women's rights, or with the problems of women in Soviet society. The function of their well-funded organization and of its numerous foreign-language publications was to promote an international solidarity of women in the interest of world peace. Women everywhere, as mothers, wives and sisters, share the same peace-loving goals, they explained, but need organization to realize their common dream of a world without war. Said Anna Shugaeva, a vice president of the committee and a World War II widow: "We have already achieved equal rights for women here. Now we are working for humanity."

As the committee officer responsible for foreign liaison, Mrs. Shugaeva meets regularly with international delegations and foreign visitors. The younger staff women who were present at our discussion had undoubtedly heard her remarks on many previous occasions, yet they listened attentively and with apparent endorsement of the proposition that in Soviet society women face no problems *as women.*

The same view prevails among many in the West who refer frequently (if vaguely) to the liberated state of Soviet women. On the rapidly growing shelves of books dealing with different aspects of women's studies there is surprisingly little to be found on the history or current status of Soviet women, although there are many references to the pronouncements on women by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Frequently quoted is Lenin's 1919 statement that the Soviet Government had done more for women in two years than had been achieved by the West in the entire modern era. Soviet women, then, seem to consider themselves "emancipated," and they are generally acknowledged as such in Western societies that are contending with problems for which the Soviet model might be expected to offer solutions.

Yet when one converses with Russian women (and not only at the Soviet Women's Committee) and the topic shifts from the impressive Soviet achievement of full legal equality of the sexes to the specific grievances of Western women, there is a striking responsiveness. Soviet women, and the younger ones in particular, are quick to volunteer that they face many of the same basic frustrations and problems. The situation presents something of a paradox: in Soviet society the "woman question" is dead; long live the "woman question."

Prompted both by the social significance of the Soviet paradigm, and by the general absence of data on the experiences of Soviet women, a group of specialists on Russia and the USSR, stimulated by Alexander Dallin of Stanford University, decided some time ago to organize a conference to promote research in the field. The conference, scheduled for International Women's Year, took place recently at Stanford where some 200 participants gathered on the sun-baked campus sprinkled with palm trees and capped with rippled fields of Spanish roofing tiles. Absent were Valentina Tereshkova, the Soviet cosmonaut who had been invited as head of the Soviet Women's Committee to address the conference, and five Soviet social scientists who had been asked to participate. Tereshkova was reported too busy to attend, while the individual invitations to the scholars were declined collectively (with thanks, but no explanation) by the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The scholars who did come to Stanford represented a broad range of academic disciplines and interests. From their reports and discussions, extending over a four-day series of lively sessions, there emerged a composite picture of Soviet women that provides the fullest and sharpest social profile yet available. Many of the conference papers will be available in a forthcoming volume; the following summary indicates some points of interest.

Women in Russia, as in other patriarchal societies, were limited historically to traditional roles as wives and mothers. Throughout the ten centuries of their pre-Soviet history they had no significant place in public or political life. A woman's social status depended on her relationships to men—initially on the position of her father, and ultimately on that of her husband. Not only status but even social identity was derivative, since there was no clear concept of what a woman *was,* outside of her relationships to men. In fact, the common word for "woman" throughout most of the Russian past was the same as that used (and still used) for "wife." A Russian folk saying proclaimed that "a chicken is not a bird, and a woman is not a person."

Only in modern times have social perceptions of women significantly changed. Late 18th-century legislation that remained in force to 1917 defined marriage in language reminiscent of the classical feudal contract: protection in exchange for subservience. While not exactly a contract of equals, it was at least an arrangement that recognized an element of equity. By the time of the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, the emancipation of women had become a question to agitate the Russian social conscience—and most notably the conscience of the "repentant male," as brought to light by the conference report of Joan Gross-

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Dorothy Atkinson, a member of Stanford University's Department of History, contributed a paper on "Society and the Sexes in the Russian Past" to the recent conference which she helped to organize. She is currently working on a book on the subject, and co-editing the conference volume on Women in Russia.

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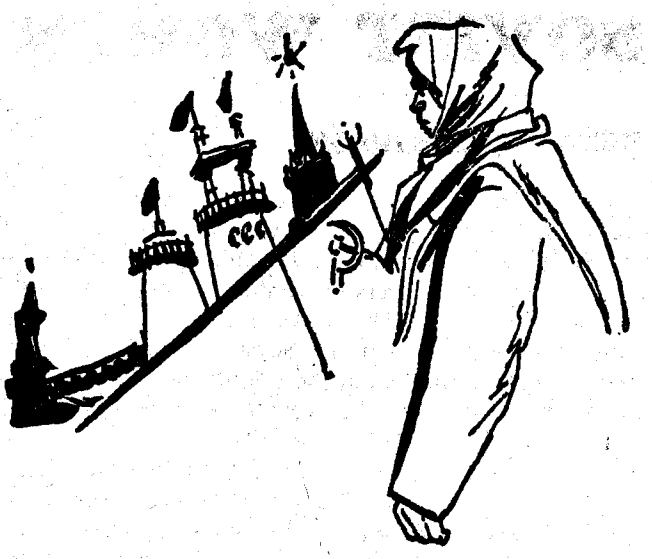
man of the University of California.

By the beginning of the 20th century Russian women had made important advances. Thanks to a long tradition of female property rights, a small number of Russian women obtained voting rights comparatively early, since a limited franchise based on property holdings was established in the 1860s and broadened after the revolution of 1905. In this respect and in several others (including the spread of female education), the position of women in Russia on the eve of World War I compared favorably with that of women in Western societies. Yet because Russian society was more radically polarized, with most of the populace at the bottom of the social scale and little in the way of a middle class, the vast majority of women derived scant benefit from the advantages enjoyed by the more fortunate of their sex. In fact, gains for the few instilled a sense of relative deprivation in the many. For the mass of women in Russia the grant of a limited franchise represented a setback.

The spurt in Russian industrial development at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th century affected women of different social strata in different ways and gave rise to different concerns. The emergence of new professional and business groups strengthened a growing feminist movement that achieved some measure of organization and voiced a demand for political rights. At the same time, women workers, who were paid less, were being absorbed at a rate even higher than men into the mushrooming industrial labor force. Inarticulate and drained of the physical energy for political activism, they were unorganized and most likely to express their compelling economic demands in spontaneous riots. Rose Glickman of Mills College drew a vivid portrait of the Russian proletarian woman and of the factors inhibiting her political development, while Alfred Meyer (University of Michigan) suggested that Marxism as a theoretical system had little to offer the women's movement. Although sympathetic to women's complaints, and supporting the principle of sexual equality, Marxists saw the oppression of women as just one of the many social injustices that would disappear along with the class structure of society, once a Socialist order was established.

With the October Revolution in 1917 a dramatic legal and institutional transformation established equal rights for women in Russia almost overnight. Sex discrimination was virtually abolished in the law. Voting rights were made universal, family law was reformed. Marriage by civil registry was established, divorce was made easy, and abortion was freely available. The declared policy of the new government was to free women from "domestic slavery" by providing child-care and communal facilities. A separate "Women's Section" was set up within the Communist Party to activate women politically and to mobilize them in support of the new regime.

Even within a decade, however, it had become obvious that "equal rights" under the law did not guarantee to women an equal position in society or in political life. Political scientist Gail Lapidus (Berkeley) observed that, despite the new voting rights, women exercised their franchise far less than did men, especially in rural areas, and that few women were to be found in significant political



posts. In the early 1920s, women accounted for under 10 per cent of Communist Party membership. By the end of the decade, the "Women's Section" had been dissolved. The liberalization of divorce laws, intended to improve the condition of women, had negative consequences for those who found themselves deserted and with children. Abortion rates soared. Economic problems made it impossible to provide extensive child-care centers, and women resisted the use of the limited communal facilities.

By 1930, ideological commitments, domestic politics, economic difficulties and the international climate had determined the Soviet leadership to undertake rapid industrialization. At the same time, agriculture was collectivized. This "second revolution," fundamentally overturning the economic structure, had a socially more extensive effect than did the earlier political and legal transformation. Women were propelled into new roles as a direct result of the sudden need for more labor. The accumulating losses of World War I, the revolution and the civil war had upset the balance of the sexes. Forced collectivization and the massive political purges of the 1930s also hit males hardest.

As the requirements of industrial development and the relative shortage of males drew growing numbers of women into the labor force, the newly proclaimed *right* of women to work outside the domestic sphere was gradually transformed into a social *obligation* to work. At the same time, falling birth rates in the face of growing labor needs and military concerns led to a reversal of family policy. Abortions were restricted, then became almost impossible to obtain. Divorce was made more difficult and more expensive.

World War II intensified the need for women to work *and* the need for population replenishment. As a result, women were simultaneously urged to enter the labor force and to produce more children. Officially established wage rates have effectively compelled women into the labor market, since few Soviet men receive incomes that will maintain a family. In addition, a series of material and moral incentives have also been provided to combat the persistent decline in the fertility rate. During World War II the government instituted a system of awards to mothers of large families. Ten children will earn a Soviet woman

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the accolade of "Heroine Mother"; those with smaller families receive lesser titles and privileges. Social welfare benefits to mothers and children were expanded in the 1940s, and more extensive child-care facilities were provided for working mothers.

The post-Stalin period, starting roughly in the mid-1950s, has witnessed a relaxation in some areas of social and family policy. The right to abortion has been restored, although the general unavailability and low quality of contraceptive devices has been interpreted (by Helen Desfosses, Harvard) as evidence of an unofficial pro-natalist policy that gives women the ultimate right of choice in the matter of childbearing, but extracts a punitive price in terms of the psychic and physical risks of abortion. The "pill" is prohibited or discouraged (depending on varieties) on the ground that it has been inadequately tested. Soviet welfare benefits provide generous paid maternity leaves and a woman may stay at home with her new baby for up to a year, with a guarantee that her job will be held for her. Families whose incomes are below a stipulated minimum receive monthly payments for each child. A considerable investment has been made in nursery and child-care centers and, although the facilities available are not adequate to the needs of working mothers, some are little patronized because many women dislike the idea of institutional care for the very young.

Despite the government's efforts to encourage reproduction, abortion rates are high and today the typical Soviet woman has one child or two. The birth rate has continued to decline as women have moved out of the home and into the factory or office. At present almost all physically fit Russian women of working age are employed outside the home. Urban fertility rates are lowest, and there is some concern because the Russian population is growing less rapidly than are those of many ethnic minorities (particularly in Central Asia).

A reason often cited for smaller families is the acute shortage of living space, especially in the cities. This has undoubtedly been a factor, but declining fertility rates have accompanied industrialization and urbanization in other modern societies, not all of which have seriously lacked housing, so other considerations are presumably involved. Soviet sociological investigations, and even the popular press, have given increasing attention in recent years to the phenomenon of women's "double burden." At its root is the traditional assumption (on the part of both sexes) that the care of children and housework are exclusively female responsibilities. No medals are awarded to "Hero Fathers," and that may be appropriate, since women alone are expected to shoulder the weight of family care. Studies indicate that Soviet men have more leisure time and get more rest than do their wives.

Traditional expectations and attitudes have been a sharp brake on the translation of rights into realities. Although women have assumed new functions in society, and new economic responsibilities, they have not shed the old. An analysis of contemporary Soviet textbooks by Mollie Rosenhan (San Jose State University) showed that children are still being taught to accept conventional stereotypes: mother, essentially, keeps house (though she may moonlight on the outside); father goes to work. The persisting image of the male breadwinner, although women constitute a little more than half the Soviet labor force, is in part a reflection of the higher earning capacity of Soviet men. The wage of a wife on the average is two-thirds that of her husband. Yet equal pay for equal work does prevail in the USSR, according to the investigation of Janet Chapman of the University of Pittsburgh. The catch is that women predominate in the lower-paid fields or, to put it more precisely, those in which they predominate are paid less well. Today 74 per cent of Soviet doctors are women, but in the USSR medicine is not a highly paid profession. And in *all* fields, including those they heavily dominate, the proportion of women drops sharply at the upper levels. Many women do hold important and prominent posts in the Soviet economy and society, and they represent a great stride forward, but extralegal discrimination remains obstructive.

Employers are said to be reluctant to place women in positions of responsibility because of the interruptions to work schedules and the cost of maternity leaves and of paid absences granted to mothers of sick children. Social welfare benefits thus boomerang to hurt women's career chances; and the same is true of the retirement at age 55 rather than 60 (an advantage magnified by the longer female life span). In addition, domestic duties allow women little time or opportunity for off-the-job study or for activities that promote careers. Although women have the legal right to equal education, and make up half of the enrollment in institutions of higher education, relatively few of them receive the most advanced degrees. It has been suggested that many Soviet women prefer the lower-paid, less demanding jobs because of the conflicting responsibilities of their domestic lives. The problems of Soviet household management are compounded by an acute shortage of consumer services and goods (including household appliances) that result from the state's determination of priorities.

The question arises, why have Soviet women not made more effective use of their political voice to influence economic decision making? The political participation of women, as reflected in voting rates, has risen steadily, and many Soviet women now hold political posts. Yet here, as in economic life, the incidence of women falls off abruptly in the high echelons. No woman is to be found in the critical power center, the party's Politburo, and less than a quarter (23 per cent) of party members today are women. In an original study of Soviet women in regional political posts, Joel Moses (Iowa State University) discovered that in the higher positions they tend to be placed in "ideological" rather than in the "practical" positions that lead to more important assignments. Career patterns suggest that their brief tenure in these offices amounts to sexual tokenism in politics. Another interesting report by Jerry Hough (Duke University) revealed a correlation between availability of child-care facilities in different cities and the levels of women's political participation. This may show that Soviet women can gain their objectives by political activism; or, alternatively, that more adequate provision of such facilities permits women to engage in political life.

The final session of the Stanford conference was devoted to comparative analysis of the position of women in modern Communist and non-Communist societies. Inter-

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estingly, some of the strongest similarities cut across political systems, while a major contrast emerged within the Communist world. The most striking parallel involved the similar effects of industrialization on sex roles, whatever the political context. The contrast noted was in China where, as Victor Li of Stanford pointed out, the level of industrial development does not yet provide enough jobs to employ all women outside the immediate household economy, yet the government pursues an anti-natalist policy.

Discussing the historical position of women in the United States, Carl Degler (Stanford) emphasized that only since World War II has a substantial proportion of married women entered the work force. At present women account for about 40 per cent of employed workers in the U.S. economy. Degler observed that, because the movement of American women into the labor market was not preceded by any national commitment to sexual equality, that movement in itself has not led to genuine equality.

In the Soviet experience, ideological commitment on the part of revolutionaries preceded social change. But in the light of Degler's comments, Meyer's thesis about the theoretical limitations and assumptions of Marxism takes on special significance. The Soviet record makes it clear that equality *de jure*, however essential a precondition, is no guarantee of equality *de facto*. Nor will "getting women out of the home" solve the problem of sexual inequality. What the latter does produce is a set of problems, common to women in all industrial societies, that are not likely to be solved as long as "ideology"—in the shape of traditional ideas and attitudes about sex roles—remains unchanged. The roles of male and female in traditional societies are economically interdependent. Change in one set of roles calls for readjustment in the other. Women have taken on new roles as a result of economic pressures and prevailing perceptions of social need. As the experience of Russian women illustrates, the transition has been neither easy nor, for most of them, particularly agreeable.

Societies resist change; an innate and salutary conservatism within them helps to insure their cohesiveness and continuity. Marriage and the family have been basic institutions in the structure of society. Like the traditional specialization of labor, they offered and still offer many advantages to women as well as to men. Since the Industrial Revolution, however, the utility of these institutions to women would appear to be declining. High divorce rates, the fact that most divorces are initiated by women, and the recent slight decline in the marriage rates of young women—all of which are evident in advanced industrial societies, including the USSR—seem to support this conclusion. These signs of structural stress bear witness to the most recent phase of the Industrial Revolution, a social movement that Degler has optimistically called a struggle for the "last freedom." With less eloquence, and with apologies to Ortega y Gasset, we might label it "the revolt of the Mrs." Marriage may have become less equitable for industrial woman laboring under the "double burden." And industrialization, with its attendant technological and scientific advances, has strengthened the position of the historically weaker sex by making economic independence possible, and by freeing women for the first time in history from a biological determinism decreeing that "anatomy is destiny."

The Soviet model turns out to be instructive in a variety of unanticipated ways. There is no reason to conclude that the stresses of modernization will lead to the disappearance of marriage or the family. At any rate, no alternative mode of structuring society has proven more attractive or more viable. The experience of women in Russia does suggest, though, that a successful adaptation to modernity implies modifications not only of law and social institutions but of social outlook as well. Scholars may continue to debate whether ideology precedes or follows social change, but it is clear that the economics of modern industrialization has at least brought closer the prospect of sexual egalitarianism. It may be that history, too, is "working for humanity." □

LABOR 1975

The Triumph of Business Unionism

B.J. WIDICK

As the twentieth anniversary of the merger of the AFL and the CIO approaches this October—it will be celebrated at the forthcoming convention of the AFL-CIO—two remarkable features dominate the labor scene. One is that, in the face of the highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression of the 1930s, union-negotiated wage increases averaged 11 per cent in the first half of 1975, up from the high figure of 9.8 per cent last year. Other figures reported by the Department of Labor:

(*1*) The average wage increase for the life of the contract, not counting any increases under cost-of-living escalator clauses, was 8 per cent a year in the 1975 contracts, compared with 7.3 per cent in 1974.

(*2*) In the larger contracts, covering 5,000 workers or more, combined wage and fringe benefits averaged 7.6 per cent a year over the life of the contract in 1975, compared with 7.8 per cent in 1974.

(*3*) The average duration of contracts negotiated this year was 28 months, well above the average of 21.7 months for the same contracts when they were last negotiated.

The contrast with the wage cuts and union-busting

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campaigns of the early 1930s is striking. The depression turned labor to the Left, and that resulted in the sit-down strikes and the triumph of the CIO, as well as the resurgence of the AFL. Hostility to business was the order of the day. In the 1974-75 deep recession, the trade unions have taken a pro-business stance on major issues affecting industry; they are an effective ally in lobbying on behalf of business, the theory being that such a policy will save jobs. That is the second noteworthy feature of the labor scene.

Under the skillful direction of John Dunlop, the most knowledgeable and able Secretary of Labor in recent times, long an intimate of the building trades union leadership and a shrewd arbitrator, the revived top-level labor-management committee has come up with a big-business-big labor program for Congressional action that seems also to have White House approval. Although AFL-CIO literature may denounce multinational corporations, George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, I.W. Abel of the steelworkers union, and Leonard Woodcock of the United Auto Workers have found no insurmountable obstacles to joining in strategy with the executives of the multinational auto, oil and steel companies.

Among the aims of the joint big business-big labor group are to become active propagandists for its proposals on Capitol Hill. These include overcoming public resistance to the construction of nuclear energy plants, accelerating the switch from oil to coal in power generation, stretching out the timetable for environmental restrictions on electric production and use, and encouraging capital formation by means of a variety of new tax breaks, including a step-up from 10 per cent to 12 per cent in the recently liberalized investment-incentive tax credit for utilities.

Actually this coalition is only the culmination of a trend that has grown up during this recession for individual unions to work with the employers of their memberships. With rare exceptions, unions have joined with employers in seeking relief from taxes and government regulations, or in asking Congress to provide other assistance, be it tariffs, money or whatever. The railroad brotherhoods have urged Congress to lend railroads more funds; the communications workers union worries about the antitrust action against AT&T; the steelworkers join industry in demanding tariffs or quotas on steel imports; the auto workers union supports the Big Three's arguments for delaying emission-control deadlines; in the trucking industry Teamsters lobbyists are working effectively at state and national levels to obtain an easing of load limitations, or to find fuel for its carriers; the clothing and textile unions seek to protect their employees from the competition of "cheap foreign goods."

Behind this alliance drawn up on the legislative front is the fact that most private employers can and do pass on to consumers any additional wage costs. Thus they help to keep the inflation spiraling and erode the real purchasing power of unorganized workers. Walter Reuther's famous demand in the 1946 General Motors strike, "Higher Wages Without Price Increases," now rests in the archives of the UAW. And even though inflation prevents labor from making any gains in real purchasing power, the new contracts are impressive in a time of deep recession and high unemployment. Nor are major companies seeking to bust unions as in the old days. (Textiles is the last frontier of large manufacturing open-shop policies.)

Of course, the strength at the bargaining table reflects the inherent power of unionism, and management now recognizes that accommodation is a more fruitful policy than class conflict. There are two exceptions to this general collusive pattern, of which the first is public service unionism, notably in the urban areas like New York, where the workers face wage freezes, layoffs and other restrictions. It's far more difficult for city and state administrations to raise taxes than it is for corporations to raise prices.

The militancy of a public service union like the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees reflects this problem: a statewide strike of public employees took place recently in Pennsylvania. In New York City and other urban areas the anguish of the public service unions, which cannot operate in the manner of private sector unions, has been making headlines. It has not escaped notice, however, that the rest of the labor movement has responded with a studied silence. It is the case of each union for itself. And of course, all unions are meeting with resistance from smaller firms, which fear to price their products out of the market, or which, as suppliers to large industries, must accept the prices dictated by their powerful customers. But unionized and employed workers do have an organization and a job basis for coping with the evils of inflation.

The second exception is the vast army of unemployed and unorganized. They number millions—at least one-quarter of the population may be included—and among them are the poor, the blacks and other minorities, and the aged. They have nothing to celebrate this Labor Day. To be sure, on paper and in legislative proposals before Congress, unions argue for social welfare programs, but the undeniable fact is that last spring, as Elizabeth Drew demonstrated in a brilliant *New Yorker* article, labor's most intense lobbying was spent on helping major industries like the auto industry. Social programs were pushed to the so-called "back burner."

The evidence seems indisputable that, as business institutions and service organizations for their employed members, unions are a success. But as a social movement of the working majority, they lack the dynamic appeal, momentum and influence generated by such mass activities as the civil rights or anti-war movements of recent times. Meanwhile, President Ford's policies and vetoes, tending consciously toward the reduction of social welfare at a time of heavy unemployment, are creating Marx's *Lumpenproletariat*—a declassed element, demoralized and living on meager welfare, estranged from society. Michael Harrington's "Other America" is experiencing a larger growth rate than the gross national product.

It is hardly surprising, then, except to labor leaders, that in most national opinion polls the union hierarchy is down with the oil industry and the business executives at the bottom of public esteem. No one has described the narrow focus of current labor policies better than did Meany himself, when he was asked if there was any way he could foresee that the AFL-CIO might undertake to organize or coalesce the feelings of rank-and-file dissatisfaction shown

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at the unemployed demonstration in Washington last spring. "No," he replied, "the AFL-CIO is pretty conservative in certain ways. We believe in the American system. We believe in working within the American system. When we get laws passed over on Capitol Hill that we feel are detrimental to us, we just bat away and try to change them. We don't man the barricades, and we don't take to the streets. And we don't call general strikes, and we don't call political strikes."

(*The American Weekly* cover illustration, September 1, 1946)

How It Looked Thirty Years Ago

Meany, a lobbyist all his life, has never understood that it took more than lobbying, important as that was, to institute all the New Deal measures, to organize unions in the 1930s, or to get civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s. But the union movement suffers from more than Meany's image as a Washington lobbyist and a highly paid, comfortable executive.

The brutal fact that the scandal-ridden Teamsters union—its leaders are again under federal investigation—remains the largest labor organization, and is most resistant to internal or external reform, damages labor's image. Nor is the current probe into the affairs of the National Maritime Union likely to improve the public view of unions when the story of Joe Curran's regime comes out. Most union leaders vigorously reject reformers or reforms, except under duress or when faced with revolt. The steelworkers hierarchy, for example, hopes to destroy its insurgent Ed Sadlowski, instead of welcoming a talented young leader with a good public reputation.

The AFL-CIO convention will not have as guest of honor a union man of democracy like James M. Morrisey, a dissident member of the NMU, who won a $333,500 damage suit against the union, its former president, Joe Curran, and its current president, Shannon J. Wall, for the terrible beating and harassment he received while fighting for union democracy. It is far more chic to denounce totalitarian rule in other lands.

Nor is the AFL-CIO convention about to pass a resolution praising the new United Mine Workers leadership for overthrowing a corrupt and murderous regime and making the coal miners union a decent and viable organization. Most labor leaders were sympathetic to Tony Boyle, not to Arnold Miller, the reformer (the UAW was an exception). The political disarray among unions, their wheeling and dealing, doesn't assist labor in gaining respect or influencing American public opinion.

After the debacle of "neutrality for Nixon" (the Meany policy), and even though it later joined the impeachment movement against Nixon, the AFL-CIO has never recovered its earlier authority. Some unions are trying, quietly, to escape the grip of Meany's political policies and disasters, but as yet without much success. More and more of the AFL-CIO's 110 affiliated unions are collecting and spending political funds on their own, instead of forwarding them to Meany's Committee on Political Education (COPE). Last year, only one-third of the unions met their COPE quotas, and another third handed over less than half of its dues. Meany's conservatism and his bitter feud with Walter Reuther in the past blocked a recent attempt to bring the UAW back into the AFL-CIO.

The AFL-CIO lacks a candidate in the coming Presidential campaign, Meany having soured on Sen. Henry Jackson for not being sufficiently cold-war minded. As in the 1972 primaries, labor has no policy or skipper to guide it through the shoals of political waters. It approaches 1976 divided and unsure of itself. And it faces a formidable opponent in a President whose philosophy and lifetime record in public office are hostile to every key union belief and program, yet a man whom labor leaders will welcome at the coming convention of the AFL-CIO—unless President Ford decides not to come. But a man who, with his anti-civil rights voting record, could appear at an NAACP convention, should have no difficulty before a labor convention, especially when he's backstopped by a well connected and influential Secretary of Labor who holds the purse strings and policy making power over many of labor's pet programs emanating from the Department of Labor.

John Dunlop's proposals before Congress to replace in the building trades the system of unrestricted competition between crafts and locals in collective bargaining with a system of oligopoly arrangements—all power to the decision makers at the top—and the support of the union leaders for this interference with "free collective bargaining" demonstrate his operational skill and knowledge of unions and industry problems in that sector of the economy. Next to George Meany, he is bound to be the most important figure behind the scenes at the AFL-CIO convention next month. His proposals, expected to be

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endorsed by the building trades convention before the AFL-CIO meeting, include, according to *The Wall Street Journal:*

(*1*) Provisions to bolster the control of national building trades leaders over their often rambunctious locals. These might include requiring locals to notify the national union of pending negotiations and to get its permission to strike.

(*2*) Mandatory cooling-off periods before local strikes could be started, coupled with mandatory mediation of disputes.

(*3*) Establishment of one or more joint labor-management-government bodies in Washington that would step in to mediate disputes, try to head off strikes and "jawbone" local labor and management into keeping settlements noninflationary.

(*4*) Strong incentives to negotiate construction labor contracts on a wide-area or regional basis, instead of the current local-by-local pattern that fosters wage competition among unions.

Dunlop's support of the on-site picketing legislation favored by the building trades, and its assured passage, give him extra power in this situation.

Abroad, the role and influence of American labor leaders have almost vanished. They long ago lost any prestige they had in the post-World War II period. Given the evident signs of big labor seeking to help big business recover from its own mistakes, and the triumph of business unionism with its pro-capitalist philosophy as the dominant force in trade union operations, the claims of AFL-CIO spokesmen that they are a dynamic social force (even Socialist, according to some of the rationalizers) simply aren't taken seriously by any significant segment of the non-Communist mass trade unions in Western Europe.

American labor leaders may find no contradiction in allowing multinational corporations to be denounced in the labor press while the leaders themselves join the corporate executives in joint lobbying enterprises, but the English and German Socialists do—actions speak louder than words. As for the limits of internationalism and labor cooperation against multinational corporations, Meany's views are unlikely to cheer unions anywhere. Recently a reporter asked, "Mr. Meany, is the AFL-CIO making any efforts to truly internationalize what we call international unions to get something toward worldwide bargaining against multinational corporations?" Meany replied:

> No. No. This is something we have never done. We have cooperation, through international trade secretariats, with unions all over the world. The international secretariats are really international associations of unions in the same field. For instance, in the metal field, the white-collar field, the food and agriculture field, the retail field, and so on.
>
> But insofar as attempting to set up international unions and bargaining on an international basis—that's not only unwise, I think it is impractical. I don't think it will work. In fact, I think it would result in a collapse in the international trade secretariat structure.
>
> Now, what we do in the international trade secretariats—we talk about common problems and we exchange ideas and experiences. And we cooperate to the fullest extent that we can. But we make no attempt to get into their collective bargaining, just as we would certainly not welcome them coming into our collective bargaining.

As a consequence of AFL-CIO policy, international trade union activity, except for the world auto councils, is largely ceremonial, not substantive. Actually, the Meany policy reflects the general political demoralization of American labor leaders in their world view and in their reaction to the growth of multinational corporations. They see the world situation as catastrophic and they see multinational corporations as too powerful and themselves as impotent.

Another AFL-CIO spokesman recently summarized union pessimism: "Since worker organizations are confined to national boundaries [news to American affiliates in Canada] they have no defense against these prejudicial transfers of capital and technology and thus are driven [an interesting verb] to an international action through the trade secretariats, the International Labor Organization and various other forms of organization in an effort to deal with this new, supernational economic phenonemon." The isolationist economic policies of the AFL-CIO aren't helping them to retain any serious contact abroad. "Buy American" programs, urging unions elsewhere to give up jobs so that American workers can keep hold of theirs, are scarcely popular abroad, and are futile as a problem-solving device at home.

Of course, the basic reason for the decline of American union influence abroad is the fact that the AFL-CIO remains a world symbol of the cold war—re-emphasized by its enthusiastic response to Alexander Solzhenitsyn's call for a holy war against communism, a program attuned to Meany's personal views. The AFL-CIO was not upset that this giant but tragic figure of world literature was embraced by Jesse Holmes and Strom Thurmond, two reactionary Senators with impeccable anti-labor credentials, or that Solzhenitsyn's Washington speech all but called for an atomic war, and deplored the coalition against Hitler in World War II. It should be remembered that neither Solzhenitsyn nor George Meany has a monopoly on criticism of totalitarianism—Andrei Sakharov and other Russian dissidents who remain Socialists call for a new and more realistic approach to détente. But they do not, as many people do not, reject it as a total fraud, seeing it rather as a mixed blessing with potential.

For world labor, the audience of Pentagon officers and right-wing Senators sitting with the AFL-CIO at the invitation of George Meany to hear Solzhenitsyn could scarcely be considered a pro-union world working-class rally, even if the audience applauded Solzhenitsyn's cry, "workers of the world, unite." How little effect this kind of policy will have on world labor and how unpopular the AFL-CIO is in Europe are matters really understood by Meany, if not by his staff. He recently told a Portuguese Socialist, according to the story, that he would support him or denounce him, whichever the man thought would help more. The inability of the AFL-CIO and other American unions to persuade European non-Communist unions to deny the Palestine Liberation Organization a special status at the international labor organization congress indicates what minimal influence American labor now has abroad.

It remains to be seen whether any deviations from these hard-line, business-union programs, whose unquestioned champion is Meany, will emerge at the AFL-CIO

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convention. However, the most probable prospect for the near future—and it is not very optimistic—was well expressed in a *New York Times* article by Arnold Weber, a man knowledgeable about labor, who worked as a top assistant to John Dunlop during the Nixon wage-freeze program. It was Weber who said that the function of the Nixon wage-price board was "to zap labor and it did."

Weber wrote in the *Times*:

> Finally, any effort to move organized labor to the Left would have to circumnavigate the formidable presence of George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO. Mr. Meany is a fifty-year veteran of the ideological wars in the labor movement and has shown an enduring distaste for socialism or other programs that would limit worker freedom and the discretion of the parties in collective bargaining. . . .
>
> Thus, to date, organized labor has served as an economic and political stabilizer during a turbulent period. Those who have an interest in stability and the constructive evolution of our institutions can draw some comfort from this irony. However, the circumstances that have contributed to the moderation also flash a warning. Mr. Meany is not indestructible, nor is the patience of the rank-and-file members unlimited. . . .
>
> They have retained their allegiance to the system of democratic capitalism because, by and large, it has delivered and they have helped to make it work. But the American labor movement did not emerge to facilitate the retrogression of the working class.

The forthcoming convention, seen in that perspective, suggests how little leadership there is among the leaders of the AFL-CIO—unless the unexpected occurs and fresh, independent voices are heard at the gathering. The gap between the potential of labor and the reality is probably as deep as it has been since William Green and the conseva-tive AFL craft unions were spokesmen for the organized labor movement in the early 1930s. That should be a matter of concern for all unionists and other Americans who believe that a democratic and viable trade union movement is an institution necessary to a democratic society. □

An Insurgent's View

EDWARD SADLOWSKI

There isn't a great deal for the labor movement to cheer about this Labor Day. Where in this Bicentennial year is the American dream for the nation's working people and for those who wish to work but cannot find a decent job? Important changes are occurring in the society, but their most immediate effects give little reason to rejoice.

The proportion of blue-collar jobs in the economy has been declining since 1960, and the slack hasn't been picked up in other occupations. Much of the loss is due to automation. Technological change has increased the productivity of American workers in almost every year since 1900, but the laboring class has never had nearly its full share of the benefits. Worse yet are the conditions of poverty and hunger in America. I don't have to quote statistics. In my own community of South Chicago, in the heart of the most intensely capitalized region of the country, you'll find kids who don't have enough to eat. Go to any of the big steel mills, like Youngstown Sheet & Tube in nearby Indiana Harbor or U.S. Steel's Gary Works: you'll find the jobless men, many of them Vietnam veterans, hanging out on the corners, their families disintegrating and the kids hungry and scared. The situation is no better inside the big cities, or on the Indian reservations, or in the agri-business farm towns of the Southwest. The truth is that 30 million or even 40 million Americans are living in poverty or something damn close to it.

Among the 126,000 workers I represent in the Calumet district of the United Steelworkers union, unemployment is above 15 per cent. In basic steel it has passed 17 per cent, and in the can factories on Chicago's West Side it's been above 20 per cent for more than a year. In industries like auto and construction the picture is even worse and most economists, except the ones hired by the present administration, are forecasting an almost no-growth economy for an indefinite period.

I hear a lot of talk that workers in the major industries have supplementary unemployment benefits to protect them from the drastic income losses of the 1930s and 1940s. But for every worker drawing such assistance many, many more have exhausted their benefits, or were never covered by this advanced form of insurance that is enjoyed in only a handful of unions. Every issue of the daily paper tells some version of the old story: the country's working people are being forced to bear most of the burden of these hard times.

I see racism and class prejudice between the lines of all the proposals offered by the Ford-Rockefeller administration, by the bankers and financiers and by the suburban corporate executives. They are saying to us, "We're sorry for all you blacks and Mexicans and Puerto Ricans and Italians and Poles, all you working stiffs in your dingy neighborhoods, but you'll have to shift for yourselves. Find your own ways to keep off the welfare rolls. Pay your full share and some of our share too for municipal services. If your cities are rotting come out to the suburbs but don't ask us to help finance your homes and don't move into our neighborhoods unless you can afford a 3-acre plot. Sooner or later our post-industrial economy will create jobs for you; in the meantime find ways to educate yourselves to fill them. Yank on your bootstraps like your fathers and mothers did. Let's all return to the old virtues of frugality and hard work."

Despite the lessons of recent years we are still expected to believe that by being well-behaved, by saving and by learning to turn a shrewd buck we can rescue ourselves and the rest of the world. Meanwhile, the moral bank-

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ruptcy of the people who propagate this myth is exposed every night on the six o'clock news. This is as much a cause of the present depression as any failure in the economy.

But I can't honestly claim that the labor movement has done enough to prevent recent disasters of leadership and policy. Organized labor does do more than any other institution of the society to advance the well-being of working people, but there's stagnation and failure of leadership there too. For example, George Meany has said a number of times on national TV that we need more socialism, but he has never been specific about what he means by that, and two minutes later he'll defend his role in the destruction of a democratically elected government in Chile. In a real sense this sums up where the entrenched leadership of organized labor stands today: a lot of high-minded talk about social welfare and the protection of jobs, but when it comes to action the results are more likely to be conservative or even reactionary.

So one change to be thankful for this Labor Day is that there are signs which point to the end of the era of docile labor. One by one the old oligarchies are beginning to crumble; their power to squelch opposition at union conventions or on the shop floor is weakening. The coming years of American labor politics will see the continued election of previously unknown men and women to leadership of the industrial, trade and public service unions. This new generation of labor leaders will be much less satisfied with the *status quo* of labor management relations than was the generation it is replacing.

The actual policy directions of rank-and-file movements and of new leadership are, however, uncertain. The initial battles are usually internal ones. Change at the top in most unions today first requires years of struggle to guarantee the basic rights of electoral democracy and due process. In the Mine Workers' union the Yablonski family paid for these rights with their lives. Yet their tragic deaths have made it much more difficult to deny the right of any union members freely to choose their leaders.

But enforcement of fair labor elections will depend on the vigilance of many Americans not themselves involved as union members in their own labor campaigns. There might not have been a Miller-Boyle election in the UMW had it not been for the efforts of grass-roots community organizers in Appalachia. Nor would the U.S. Department of Labor have acted as forcefully in the Mine Workers' case or in my District 31 case were it not for the efforts of attorneys like Joe Rauh and of writers like Herman Benson. Benson's *Union Democracy Review* has been a voice in the wilderness for many years and deserves the support of all who seek a more democratic labor movement.

The basic right of union members to debate issues and to choose their leaders is essential. Without it I don't think organized labor can remain a viable institution of the working class. But democratic process alone is not enough. Organized labor's future depends on a movement toward the fundamental goal of the labor movement: winning an equitable share of the nation's wealth for the people who produce that wealth by their labor. To advance this goal we must use means adapted to the requirements of the domestic and world economies, and the best means come from the labor movement's basic principles: the right of workers to bargain collectively; the right of all Americans to a decent job. Both these principles have been under heavy attack.

Today the question most often put to workers and their leaders is how their demands at the bargaining table can be channeled in ways that will reduce the wage-price spiral. This question assumes that wage demands cause most of the nation's inflation. I reject that assumption and especially for the labor force engaged in primary and secondary manufacturing. Too much of the wealth produced by this sector of the economy has for too long been shunted into nonconsumable goods, particularly in the weapons economy. Added to this inflationary pressure is the problem of severely rising energy costs. Beyond even that is the fact that we've been exporting our blue-collar work overseas while we've been increasing the number of less productive white-collar jobs here.

As long as the United States had an economy which seemed capable of infinite expansion it was possible to claim that workers could become affluent through collective bargaining or by moving into business or the professions. No one would have to lose since everyone could gain. In a low-growth economy, however, we begin to question the possibility of unlimited affluence, especially when it is bought at the expense of the earth's diminishing resources and by the exploitation of people elsewhere in the world. But where does this leave the blue-collar worker and the poor who never made it into the affluent society before the doors closed?

No labor leader and no worker wants to strike. We don't get paid when the work is stopped and it's never certain that we'll get back what was lost when the strike is over. But the right to strike is the origin of the workers' power and any industrial democracy that will mean a better share of the wealth for us cannot be had by abandoning that right. If I am wrong about this, I have misread the history of labor in the Western world.

Now for the problem of jobs in general. There won't be many new steel mills built in this country in the future, but in many ways perhaps that's not something to mourn. Other parts of the world need to build their productive capacity and in any case our present installations are rarely used beyond 85 per cent of capacity. But where are the jobs to come from to provide for the millions of unemployed or underemployed in this country?

The bigger issue here is how the economy can create jobs which will put people to work in ways that lead to a better share of the wealth for those who need it most. Clearly we must begin building more middle- and low-cost housing again, and more or improved mass transit systems. More money will have to be spent for health care, educational programs, parks and recreation, and community development programs. These are social investments, and if they are distributed wisely and equitably they contribute to higher levels of living and ultimately substitute for direct wage benefits. I realize that the returns on these investments are slow in coming, but they are investments in people, in the generations of Americans to come.

Mention of spending in the social sector always calls forth protests about big government and unmanageable

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bureaucracies. I don't deny that it is a serious problem. People don't live in the federal government; they live in cities, towns and local communities. More planning at all levels of government will be necessary, but federal control and federal spending should be reduced by distribution of benefits to localities. Federal regulation to insure equality and justice will always be necessary, but an increase in the power of people in their localities is a necessity.

Nothing is going to be handed to us and there may be too many Labor Days in the near future with too little to celebrate. One thing is certain however; a growing and ever more powerful proportion of America's working people feel it's time to get things going again, to bring about changes that will benefit them rather than some elite. None of the goals and few of the means are new. And, as usual, the summary can be made in one word: ORGANIZE. □

THEY SELL BOOKS, DON'T THEY?

MAUREEN MYLANDER

"The trouble with American booksellers is that they don't know how to sell books." (This from a London bookseller who recently toured stores between Washington and New York.) Deciding to see for myself, I phoned or visited a dozen Washington, D.C. booksellers, including stores of three national chains, four independents, a wholesaler, two department stores, a religious bookstore and Dial-A-Book. At each stop I sought the same four items: a new nonfiction Literary Guild selection whose author recently appeared on the *Today Show*; a nonfiction book published last fall and reviewed but not advertised; a best seller that sold more than 100,000 copies three years ago and is now available in paperback, and a widely reviewed first novel published last fall. I learned that a person needs patience, persistence and cash in hand to buy anything but a current or potential best seller in Washington. The only book the stores carried consistently was the one recently promoted on the *Today Show*. Last fall's books and the three-year-old best seller were "too old" to keep in stock. Can I special order them, I asked. Yes, but not by phone; you must come in and make a deposit or (at some stores) pay in full. Only the store specializing in religious books accepted phone orders. The manager explained: "Nobody wants to steal a Bible or theology book." Another store advertised that it takes phone orders. When I called, the clerk said I must prepay in person. "But your Yellow Pages ad says you take telephone orders," I protested. "Yes, we can *take* your order, but before we *fill* it, we need a prepayment!"

Several stores charged a handling fee of 75 cents or $1 per book. Most sellers would not order paperbacks, and all estimated four to six weeks for delivery. My last hope was Dial-A-Book, whose Yellow Pages ad promised:

> Any Book May Be Ordered By Phone—
> Book Is Then Mailed Directly To You—
> No Need To Visit A Store.

I dialed eight times. (Busy signal.) Two hours later, a recorded message told me: "The number you have reached, 423-6523, has been disconnected. . . ." There was no forwarding number and not even the Washington Booksellers Association knew what had become of Dial-A-Book.

Steve Cogil, educational director of the American Booksellers Association (ABA) ran a similar test recently by calling twenty-one major bookstores in New York City, Connecticut and New Jersey and asking for a book about squash. None of the stores carried a book about the sport, and none offered to special order or even locate such a book.

Our mutual experiences reminded me of the 1961 ABA convention when several bookmen invented in jest the hypothetical Oblivion Press: "We take orders from no one." By May 1975 the industry was not joking about such matters. As an estimated 12,000 members of the book trade met in New York City for the 75th annual meeting of the association, the cast of characters was as diverse as publishing itself. The aisles—lined by exhibits featuring 20,000 hardcover and paperback titles competing for public attention this fall—were jammed with publishers, editors, agents, publicists, press, critics, celebrities, authors, commission book salesmen, and representatives of small presses from towns with unfamiliar names. Finally came the independent booksellers, toting shopping bags crammed with free books and order blanks, and wearing name tags that told at a glance whether or not their stores were in a "good book town."

An ABA press release had announced that the convention theme would be "to foster dialogue" about industry concerns. But conversations between independent sellers and publishers more often turned into debate. Booksellers were concerned with the problems of selling those books on brave display. The major complaint: too many titles, with too many duplicates, causing too much obsolescence and too many returned books. (Bookstores usually pay shipping both ways, receive credit rather than cash refunds, and sometimes pay a 10 per cent penalty.) Some composite dialogues:

> *Bookseller*: Do we really need *four* "Cooking For Two" cookbooks and a dozen different American dictionaries?
>
> *Publisher*: I signed up a book on magic after calling five bookstores to determine the need. Later I learned that seven other publishers were doing books on magic.
>
> *Bookseller*: When an excellent book comes out, we ask the salesman for it and he says, "That book is finished." The average shelf life of a book is twelve weeks. This is a kind of insanity.
>
> *Publisher*: You are 100 per cent right. But the problem is economic. Sales departments create pressures for more books each season because salesmen work on commission.
>
> *Bookseller*: Too many books are published. Why not cut back on the total?

Maureen Mylander, a free-lance journalist, author of The Generals: Making It, Military-Style (*Dial Press*), *is now at work on a book about the publishing industry.*

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Publisher: If you eliminated 1,000 books, you would exclude all the good ones and be left with the schlock.

The second complaint was about prices. Someone recalled that when *Gone with the Wind* appeared in 1936, it cost $3 for the 1,037-page hardcover, which was quickly discounted to 89 cents in a department store price war. The average price of a cloth-bound novel today is $7.50, nearly double the price of ten years ago. The average hardcover nonfiction book cost $14 in 1974, or 15.5 per cent more than in 1973.

Meanwhile, the standard 40 per cent discount publishers give retail booksellers has not changed since the 1930s.

Bookseller: Why is the markup for books among the lowest of any item in the retail trade? Anyone else operating on only 40 per cent would soon be out of business.

ABA Official: Unfortunately, the ABA cannot pressure publishers on this because that would violate antitrust laws. You don't know how frustrated we get about this.

Bookseller: Whatever happened to the idea of local bookstores ordering books collectively to get a better discount?

ABA Official: It never caught on.

Finally, there were complaints about poor services and distribution methods. To these, the most baffling and intractable of all bookselling problems, publishers had few answers.

Bookseller No. 1: Delivery takes three to four weeks whether you send books from New Jersey to Connecticut or New Jersey to California. Publishers send bills promptly, why not books?

Bookseller No. 2: I get very little cooperation from publishers on special orders. They are slow and when the book is out of print, publishers don't even tell us. So I wait two months before refunding the customer's money. I could call long distance, but that gets expensive.

Bookseller No. 3: Special orders are a nuisance, but they bring the customer into the store twice. These are oddball books, so don't go to your wholesaler because he won't have them either.

Bookseller No. 4: My store is in a remote area and I want to know how to get salesmen to come around. I've seen only three during the past year.

Bookseller No. 3: Where's she from?

Bookseller No. 2: New York City!

Despite the emphasis on dialogue, I came away from the convention feeling that each side was talking at, not to, the other. Many booksellers complained that publishers were not really listening to their business problems or helping with new merchandising ideas. A post-convention ABA newsletter quoted one store owner as saying: "If I treated my customer like these publishers treated me, I would be out of business tomorrow!" There were some exceptions, especially among small presses, the newsletter noted, but "a free book and a bag of candy didn't make up for the deficiencies of too many of the Big Guys. It appears that this attitude of complacency on the part of publishers and their representatives is not confined to the ABA convention."

A publisher's representative explained the attitude: independent bookstores represent only about 10 per cent of a publisher's sales. "Our real selling is done elsewhere." Elsewhere means book clubs, paperback houses, mail-order and remaindering (discount) houses and chain stores. The big national and regional chains like Waldenbooks, Brentano's and B. Dalton operate fewer than 100 of the ABA's 4,500 member stores. But chains now account for 25 per cent to 50 per cent (there are no exact figures) of all hardcover books sold in bookstores, and will reach an estimated 70 per cent by 1980. Do many chain-store representatives attend your convention?, I asked an ABA official. "Not really," he said. Then why do publishers bother to attend? "To launch their fall books," he said. "It's a fashion show."

The stars of that show, the forthcoming "big" books and their authors were waiting for the fanfares to announce their presence. On the second day of the convention, Muhammad Ali performed in a room jammed with TV crews, photographers, newspaper and magazine people and Random House editors and publicists. "Everything you've read about me before is child's play. It's all right here in this." He waved a huge yellow dummy of his book, *The Greatest: My Own Story* (written with Richard Durham) and predicted it would sell 2 million copies.

Q. (from audience): If it's going to make that much money and you want to help your people, why didn't you go to a black publisher?

Ali: What's a black publisher?

Joe Namath skipped the press conference for his mother (and co-author Bill Kushner), but appeared later at an Oxmoor House cocktail party to push her book, *Namath, My Son Joe*. Asked whether he would go on promotion tour with his mother, Namath said: "I don't know. I haven't read the book. It's *her* book. When it comes out, I am going down to the store and buy a copy and read it."

Elsewhere at the convention:

—Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. admitted at a book-and-author luncheon that he was there to push a book about the Fairbanks clan that he had little to do with except get his family's cooperation.

—Author Fanne Foxe (alias the Argentine Firecracker alias Annabel Battistella) appeared, as Pinnacle Books had promised, "in full flower" to promote her forthcoming autobiography (co-authored with Yvonne Dunleavy).

—The personal secretaries to Marlon Brando and Julie Andrews wore red-and-white sweat shirts advertising their book, *The Supersecs*. "Did they have a ghost writer," I asked their publisher-editor Charles Bloch. "No, they wrote it themselves, but it needed editing. Heavy editing."

—Established authors like Erica Jong, Art Buchwald, Isaac Asimov, Louis L'Amour, Nikki Giovanni, Peter Maas, Richard Scarry, Cleveland Amory and Clifton Fadiman quietly autographed their latest books and attended luncheons and cocktail parties in their honor.

—Someone tried to count books with "super" in their title: *Supersecs, Supernutrition, Superwarriors, Superdoctors, Superwives, Superworlds, Superbike* and *Superjock* (about disc jockeys).

—Pinnacle Books, capitalizing on its earlier, successful *Official Polish-Italian Joke Book*, launched *Jewish-Irish, Virgins-Sex Maniacs* and *White Folks-Black Folks* joke books.

—Cookbooks, another profitable genre, entered new realms with *The Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Cookbook, Weekend Cookbook, Cooking As Therapy, The Greengrocer Cookbook, The Starving Artist's Cookbook*, a Bible

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cookbook titled *Loaves and Fishes* and, to keep track of all those cookbooks, *Books for Cooks*, a bibliography of cookbooks.

—Four publishers offered definitive biographies of Judy Garland.

Somewhere in the shadow of look-alikes and books with 50,000 or 100,000 (claimed) printings and advertising budgets to match, thousands of worthwhile volumes drew faint notice. Steve Cogil commented on the fall offerings: "I attended the Dial-Delacorte sales conference last December and got the impression that the editors were speaking only to themselves. That is why so many look-alike books are coming out." What will be the best remembered book of the convention? *"The New Columbia Encyclopedia*. People have been waiting for it for years."

A McKay representative said the fall books are basically "backlist" types: craft and how-to books, cookbooks, sport and nature, reference, classics, children's, religious and self-help workhorses that stay in print and sell for years. "The industry is going for staples that sell. Conservative books. No more kinky sex, no first novels, no poetry."

Publisher Lyle Stuart made some predictions: "This year one-third fewer books will be published." Which ones will be eliminated? "The commercially marginal books, some of them of high quality." He named several books on his previous lists, including a translation of an Italian novel which he could not publish now because costs have doubled. He added:

> Fifty publishers here today will not be in business next year, including some of the large ones. . . . Do you want to know the key to this convention? Giveaways. In 1969 we gave new $10 bills to buyers who ordered twenty-five or more copies of *The Rich and the Super Rich.* We displayed $10,000 worth of $10 bills. They were tacked all over the booth, laid out on the counter, and people kept coming over to see if the money was real. This year we aren't giving out anything because times are rough.

Industry-wide statistics bear him out. Book sales have doubled in the last decade, totaling $3.5 billion in 1974, but higher book prices and more titles account for most of the growth. Meanwhile, publishing costs for paper, printing, binding, labor and distribution have soared, creating a profit squeeze. Another trouble indicator: the number of unsold books that stores return to publishers now averages 25 per cent to 30 per cent, up from 20 per cent in 1973. While per-title sales of best sellers have increased, sales of average books have not. And publishing currently maintains the same slice of the gross national product that it held in 1914: 0.5 per cent.

Figures for independent booksellers are also mixed, but predominantly gloomy. If ABA membership is an indication, the number of independent bookstores has grown from 2,300 in 1968 to 4,500 (out of an estimated 7,000 U.S. bookstores) in 1974. Simultaneously, however, bookstores fail at far higher rates than other retail business because their profit margin is so narrow. Since 1951, annual bookstore profits have hovered around 2 per cent, and that is far below the profit normally required to keep a small retail business healthy. The ABA reported in 1968 that even "successful" stores show dangerously low profit margins. By 1975 there was no reason to believe those margins would improve.

Statistics merely indicate the troubles in the book business; they do not explain the causes. John P. Dessauer, a long-time observer of the industry, recently advanced one theory in *Publishers Weekly*: there are too many books. The number almost quadrupled between 1950 and 1973, clogging already overtaxed distribution channels.

Back in the 1960s, when publishing stocks were glamour issues, many large corporations, expecting diversity and handsome profits, bought publishing houses. According to Dessauer, the new corporate owners knew little about the industry or its problems. Publishers and editors, meanwhile, responded to new economic pressures or were re-

(*Scribner's*, April 1937)

"The Druggist's Gazette *gave it quite a favorable review.*"

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placed by others who could. Believing that they could not profit at old output levels, the new conglomerate owners increased production, arguing that the greater the number of books, the greater the chances of hitting the best-seller jackpot.

Other publishers tried saturation selling, or bulldozing books into best-sellerdom by announcing huge first printings to demonstrate "faith" in selected titles, then promoting heavily to excite bidding from book clubs, paperback houses and other buyers of subsidiary rights. Editors learned that their careers prospered in direct proportion to the number of books sold. Many houses established selling quotas and hired scores of acquisition editors. Parkinson's law took effect: more titles meant more editors and staff, larger bureaucracies and higher costs.

The accent on growth eventually affected quality. Success of certain titles encouraged imitation and, before long, the frenzied competition tempted even the most respected houses to publish "rip-off" books (hastily produced likenesses to current best sellers). As the "me-too" mentality prevailed, speed became essential, since such books were often obsolete even before publication. Authors were encouraged to write fast, and editors often barely glanced at the resulting product.

The fever of imitation, novelty and the hit-or-miss book inevitably afflicted bookselling itself. Chain stores began stocking only the most profitable and current titles, avoiding those with less than 10,000 first printings. Flooded by the latest offerings, the chains could carry only 25 per cent of the season's list, and were forced to rotate stock rapidly, sometimes returning up to 60 per cent of books purchased only three months earlier. Paperbacks were sometimes returned to the publisher (and the shredding machine) in unopened cartons. Many independent booksellers began adopting the vices of chain stores, abandoning the traditional virtues of offering a variety of books and personalized customer service.

Still, the basic problem with American bookselling may not involve selling methods (or paucity thereof) or books (their dubious quality) but *attitudes*. The industry has long cherished various myths—usually self-fulfilling and self-limiting—about who buys books. Despite a college-educated population that is millions larger than during the 1930s, book men behave as though the number of potential readers cannot expand. A publisher once told me that hardback books sell only within 90 miles of the coast. "What about Chicago?" I asked. "That's on the coast of Lake Michigan." "Then Florida should be a very good book area," I said. "Oh, no, Florida is a softback state!" ABA conventions reverberate with publishing clichés: We are not a business. We can't do marketing research because each book is an individual product. We don't know what sells books best.

Booksellers seem particularly fearful of anything new. They have agonized, through the years, over competitive "threats" from chain stores (the current *bête noire*), books-by-phone, discount houses, mail-order operations, paperbacks, book clubs, movies, television, and even telephones, baseball, trolley cars and the bicycle. One is forced to conclude that booksellers and publishers are too often complacent, fearful and isolated from one another and from the rest of the country as well.

Fortunately, a few people in the business are looking ahead. John Dessauer has written in *Publishers Weekly* that publishers must stop overproducing books and start regaining self-esteem for their profession and their product by being more discriminate about what is published. He recommends *not* that books again become the exclusive province of the intellectual elite but that editors accept only the best of any genre, and reject manuscripts that are poorly written, poorly researched and derivative. He further advocates reissuing older titles which could still sell. "Surfeit and mediocrity are luxuries we can no longer afford," he concludes.

More important, the industry must learn to sell books again—not huckster but *sell*. Book men once did this well, particularly during the Great Depression when they survived—as publishers are currently so fond of recalling—some very hard times. Frugality, low publishing costs and active best sellers sustained the industry, but book men also sold backlist books, welcomed single-copy orders, sent sales representatives to the smallest bookstores in the most remote areas and, at times, cut prices to $1 for "All the books you can carry!"

Even today there is no shortage of good selling schemes, only of the determination to apply them. Some independent bookstores are beginning to rely less on snob appeal and more on diverse merchandise that will attract customers beyond the traditional "people who buy books." Other stores have capitalized on chain-store weaknesses by concentrating on individual service to customers. Still other stores have profitably specialized in particular types of books, or have discounted current best sellers to attract customers. Each year the ABA trains about 300 people at bookseller schools throughout the country. The association issues publications to help (and occasionally chastise) booksellers, and sends out a Newswire which alerts local stores to an author's TV or radio appearance, so that they can stock his book.

Chilton Book Company recently inserted reader response cards into craft books, to elicit consumer data and a mailing list, plus comments about the book and suggestions for other craft books. This idea could well be extended to all books, letting readers criticize or commend publishers. Other possibilities include offering gift certificates or book tokens and establishing browsing stores which would display and special order single copies of a wide range of current and backlist books. The industry might also revive books-by-phone, bookamatic and other special-ordering schemes that faltered because nobody really supported them. And booksellers might base sales appeals on the fact that, compared to the candy bar and innumerable other consumer goods, books are one of the last great bargains.

What seems to fascinate the industry most, however, is a forthcoming Books-As-Gifts pilot promotion, mainly via TV. The Association of American Publishers, ABA and other book industry groups are funding the $145,000 program for the 1975 Christmas season. The campaign resembles those that the candy, flower and fruit industries have conducted so successfully. "If prunes can do it, we can do it too!" one ABA official predicted. Other observers were less enthusiastic, calling the idea a retread of similar programs attempted in 1947 and 1960. Rebellion finally

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erupted at the 1975 AAP convention, when an advertising consultant proposed that the campaign logotype show a flower and the slogan: "Say It Better With Books!" One editor complained, "For Christ's sake, can't we show some originality?" Andrew Neilly of John Wiley and Sons suggested a better motto: "Take a good book to bed—or someone who's just read one."

Despite such efforts to revitalize bookselling, industry professionals seem fixated on ancient or stopgap measures like letting television sell books for them. It is symbolic that at its recent convention the ABA presented a major award to the *Today Show* for ten years of contribution to bookselling. One store owner concurred: "Gene Shalit sells more books for me than anybody else." Nobody commented on whether that should be the case, or on the irony that in 1950 an ABA study concluded that TV would not affect book sales, or on the near certainty that a book thus promoted will not be in local book stores on broadcast day.

So, the answer to the question—They Sell Books, Don't They?—is yes and no. Yes, if "they" means chain stores, paperback distributors, book clubs, mail-order and remainder houses and other mass-market outlets. Yes, if "books" means best sellers, paperbacks, books by celebrities and retainers of celebrities, books no more than three-to-six months old, books which fit pre-established categories and current trends.

The answer is no if "they" means independent booksellers who, by many accounts, are a dying breed. No, if "books" mean oddball books, unprofitable books, first novels, poetry, anthologies, books of local interest, books from small presses. No, too, if "books" mean those which cannot be summarized in three sentences for talk-show audiences, or those written by authors with warts on their noses. For these products and the people who write, sell and read them, the market has become a loveless place.

Hanging in the balance between yes and no are 30,000 new books published each year and more than 400,000 backlist books still in print. Even if their number is reduced, which seems unlikely, they will increasingly be subjected to economic censorship by the mass market. The independent bookseller, one of the last remaining caterers to individual taste and literary excellence, will not die suddenly but will fade into inconsequentiality. He will thus spare his colleagues the pain of attending his funeral, or asking whether he should have been saved, and whether his demise might toll some distant bell. □

ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS:

CAUGHT IN MID-STREAM

STEVE SLADE

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is caught in a conflict between old building habits and new environmental concerns. Projects authorized back when conservationists were freaks and rivers were dammed are now being delayed and sometimes dropped. With the rise in environmental consciousness the Corps has often been cast as the destroyers of nature—quite a comedown from those years when it was seen as the ever-flowing source of federal largesse. Uncomfortable as villains, the Engineers are struggling among themselves to establish a new identity and to make peace with the public they are pledged to serve.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA) both symbolizes and implements the values and priorities of a more environmentally conscious public. Some 400 Corps projects were "caught in midstream"—authorized in one era, they now had to be justified in another. Kentucky's Red River dam project is, according to Gen. Kenneth McIntyre, deputy director of civil works for the Corps, "fairly typical of those categories of projects that. . .were authorized, designed before NEPA was enacted." The decade-old controversy over this "Grand Canyon of the East" illustrates the forces shaping both the Corps's internal struggle and the frequent clashes between environmentalists and the Engineers.

The Corps's outdated benefit-cost type of analysis is consistently biased toward endorsing proposed construction projects. The Engineers provide reams of information and complex formulas for measuring the dollar value of a project against the dollar cost of construction, but the resulting ratio may add up to statistical hocus-pocus. For example, the 1955 Hoover Commission found that the Corps often "considerably overstated" flood-control benefits. University of Wisconsin Prof. Robert Haveman studied 147 Corps projects and found in them "a consistent and persistent overstatement of benefits and understatement of costs." He concluded that half the projects, valued at $2.6 billion, would not be built if an accurate benefit-cost analysis were used.

The case for Kentucky's Red River dam has been demolished by economics Prof. David Richardson of the University of Kentucky. He shows, for example, that the Corps figured major flood damages at 3.5 times the value of all the crops in the area. Richardson also demonstrates that the Corps's methodology further exaggerates flood frequency and damage, that it used dissimilar reservoirs for comparison of recreation benefits, and assumed unrealistically high growth rates in projecting water demand. By correcting these errors alone, Richardson swings the benefit-cost ratio from positive to negative.

Such distortions typify the bureaucratic twist which the Corps habitually gives to its analyses. The 1973 report of the National Water Council recommended that final

Steve Slade, program director at WBUR in Boston, completed the research for this article while he was news director at WMKY in Kentucky.

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evaluation be shifted to a high-level review board in order to free judgments from the bias of the Corps and Congress. Frequent and persuasive evidence has established the bureaucratic self-interest of the Corps and the pork-barrel guidelines of Congress.

But while bad intentions alone can occasionally push a Trinity River or Arkansas River project through Congress, a powerful assist comes from the very nature of the benefit-cost analysis. The 1955 Hoover Commission recommended "more rigid requirements" to reduce "the number of favorable reports." First, consider the discount rate—a bonus of a sort for early buyers. The annual charges on major Corps projects are broken down into categories, of which interest and amortization are frequently the largest. The discount rate is the percentage interest rate figured into the cost of the project. With interest the largest item of cost in a fifty-year project, small changes in the discount rate drastically alter the benefit-cost ratio. A few years ago a promotional group, the Water Resources Council, figured that one-third of 245 authorized Corps projects would have a ratio of less than 1 to 1 if the interest rate were raised from 5.375 per cent to 7 per cent.

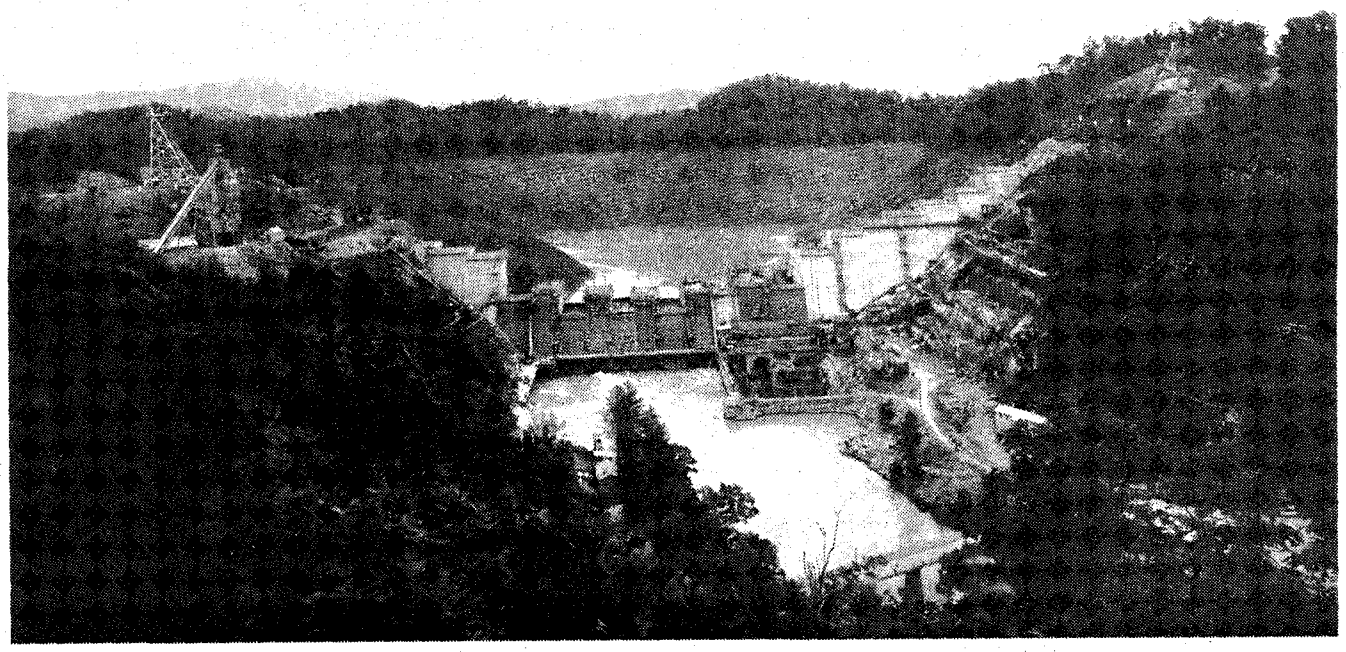
The trick in these inflationary times is that Corps projects are being built on the absurdly low interest rates which prevailed at the time of authorization. The Cross-Florida Barge Canal sputtered along for years on its World War II authorized discount rate of 2.625 per cent. The Red River dam achieves its 1.7 to 1.0 ratio by using a 3.135 per cent interest rate. Discount rate charges comprise 72 per cent of the annual charges to the project. A 5 per cent rate lowers the ratio to 1.2 to 1.0 and 6.875 per cent lowers it to 0.91 to 1.0— a level at which Congress traditionally refuses to fund projects. But under federal regulations the Engineers are allowed to use the discount rate set at the time of authorization, rather than at the time of construction.

While interest rates remain fixed, little else does in the benefit-cost ratio. Under the 1965 Federal Water Projects Recreation Act, the Corps is allowed to include outdoor recreation in its computations, and recreation makes up an increasingly large portion of the benefits cited for projects originally initiated for flood control. The Cross-Florida Barge Canal's ratio would have dipped below 1 to 1 but for the inclusion of recreational assets associated with two reservoirs. The Libby dam project on Montana's Kootenai River had a marginal 1.2 to 1.0 ratio in 1960. By 1965 the ratio was up to 1.6 to 1.0 with recreation accounting for a large chunk of the increase. General McIntyre estimates that, on a national basis, recreational benefit claims have doubled since 1965. And with 350 million visitor days a year to its credit, the Corps boasts of being "the federal government's number-one outdoor recreation agency."

The recreational justification for spoiling scenic areas tragically reflects another weakness of the benefit-cost analysis. While computing the economic value of such easily available experiences as lake fishing, motorboating and camping, the Corps attaches little cost value to the loss of unusual experiences such as canoeing, wilderness hiking and rare geological beauty. The Red River dam would turn much of a geographically and biologically rare wilderness into just another lake. The Cross-Florida Barge Canal would destroy the rare Oklawaha River and its swamp forest to create another lake where there are already hundreds.

The Corps freely admits that its type of analysis does not include a dollar estimate of environmental costs, because there is "no generally accepted technique" for translating plants, animals and scenery into "economic value." Many economists would argue for, and some have demonstrated, such techniques, but the Corps insists on calling environmental losses "intangible," while counting the quantifiable recreational benefits of destroying wilderness areas. Even without bureaucratic figure juggling, Congress has created a benefit-cost ratio which encourages environmentally damaging construction.

Though the Engineers' ratio is admittedly an inadequate



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assessment of environmental costs, the Corps is required by NEPA to file an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for each construction project. But this is often no more free of the Corps's construction bias than the analysis itself. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has twice criticized the EIS submitted for the Red River project. The most recent protest came after a six-months' review by the Corps of the council's original criticisms. The CEQ found that the statement still did not "fully and fairly" explore the benefits of the dam, other flood-control alternatives, or the dam's "social, economic and ecological impact." Even more serious is a *Louisville Courier-Journal* discovery that the Engineers' response to the CEQ had softened or deleted much of the critical language used by the consulting firm hired to review the project. The Corps is being sued by a collection of environmentalists for "omissions, distortions and inadequacies" in the final EIS. The lawsuit shrewdly labels the statement "a studied attempt at nominal compliance" with the law.

Despite the flaws in many Corps-directed environmental statements, the hearings and the review required under NEPA are a blessing for environmentalists. Hearings now mandated at every stage of the process have provided them with a forum for mobilizing public opinion. And the EIS review mechanism by the CEQ has delayed and helped stop several Corps projects. These newly acquired tricks of the trade are key elements in halting the Trinity River and Cross-Florida Canal projects and in the continued delay of the Red River dam. More important, perhaps, the NEPA reflects a change in public opinion. The Corps's Louisville district public affairs officer, Martin Pedigo, admits that "for many years the public did not care enough to find out" about Corps projects. At public hearings these days the Engineers hear from more than the real estate people.

But often bitter, exhausting and expensive project-by-project fights are hardly the way to deal with an agency which has about 300 projects in the works. The EIS is most successful if it discourages construction interests from suggesting environmentally destructive projects. General McIntyre says that such internal discouragement is "really the whole purpose of the impact statement."

The Corps claims that one in three projects has been "modified, delayed or halted" in response to the EIS; that sounds good, but rings a little hollow. The greatest number of modifications have involved dredging operations, not the more controversial construction projects. And only one-tenth of the effected projects were actually halted. McIntyre may be correct when he says that NEPA has made "it easier to do environmentally positive, but economically costly projects," but it apparently has not made it easier to build no project instead of an environmentally destructive one.

The Red River project illustrates the limits of the Corps changes. One of the modifications was to move the proposed dam 4 miles downstream in an attempt to save much of the scenic gorge area. But that has satisfied few environmentalists. The project raises the question of whether the EIS can effectively counter an anti-environmental benefit-cost analysis on projects where there is no environmentally safe way to build. Pedigo admits that the Corps will use the EIS to recommend against a project "only if things are really obvious" and that "by and large" the EIS is merely a document for public debate. It can stimulate external pressures or internal modifications, but it is not a real internal counterweight to the benefit-cost analysis. Its limited role guarantees environmentalists frequent dam-by-dam battles to the finish.

Corps spokesmen acknowledge that there is disagreement between those engineers trained to "optimize the economic aspects" and those who want to modify projects "to enhance or preserve the environment." But McIntyre insists that the "decision-making level has turned the corner" and that the foot-draggers "are not the ones who make the decisions." Still, the Corps gives substantial freedom to its thirty-six district offices and some are admittedly more "progressive" than others. McIntyre says some of the differences between Corps districts exist because "certain parts of the country are still more development-oriented as opposed to environmentally oriented." Translated, this may mean that if the people in a more remote part of America want to dam a rare, wild river for their own development, the rest of America which shares in that area's beauty may be out of luck.

Whichever side wins the Corps's internal struggle, the Engineers will continue to build. Rigged to provide favorable ratios, the benefit-cost analysis will justify ever more construction projects. The shift in benefits from flood control to recreation over the last decade will be matched by a coming shift toward the benefits of water supply. McIntyre says this will occur "because in many parts of the country there'll be almost catastrophic water shortages by the year 2000." He observes that one advantage of water-storage reservoirs "is that you can do other things with them." The multi-purpose bias of the analysis and the demand for more water will combine to encourage the building of countless reservoirs.

But this drive toward construction is fueled by more than outdated criteria for evaluating public works. The Congress remains a consistent supporter of Corps construction projects. Every year it votes more than the Administration asks for this pork-barrel collection, now worth $35 billion. For fiscal 1975, a budget-cutting year, the Corps got $1.7 billion, $86 million more than it requested. Proposals by various commissions to reform the public works evaluation and authorization process have run up against a stone dam or two.

The Congressional mania for pork-barrel construction, the perversity of benefit-cost analysis and the beaver complex of some engineers may frustrate attempts to make the Corps more responsive to America's increased environmental consciousness. Corps spokesmen seek to avoid blame for unpopular projects by innocently explaining their errand-boy relationship to Congress. While it soft-pedals the Engineers' willing participation in the act, the argument does point toward Congress as the principal villain. Congress has mandated the benefit-cost analysis, Congress continues to vote increased construction funds and Congress is the key force behind the drive to build. And then Congress caught the Corps in midstream by imposing on it the restrictions of NEPA. Now, Congress, as much as the Corps, is caught in this conflict between past and present. But only Congress can reconcile its conflicting mandates and move the Corps peacefully into the future. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Revolutionary Detroit

DETROIT: I Do Mind Dying, a Study in Urban Revolution. *By Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin. St. Martin's Press. 241 pp. $10. Paper $3.95.*

PAUL BUHLE

"What clearly differentiated the Detroit experience from other major social movements of the sixties and early seventies," the authors note in their introduction, "was its thoroughly working-class character." This extremely important book shows the merger of the Civil Rights-New Left moods with factory and community struggles in a dynamic blue-collar city, and for that reason alone is an advance over the spate of recent Socialist writings which merely advocate the fusion of working-class, racial and New Left movements or describe the possibility in abstract terms. *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* is also instructive in its form. The authors seek to re-create the social, cultural and political environment of working class Detroit: the pervasive violence, the local music scene, the emergence of "new" ethnic groups (notably Arabs). Often the subjects whirl by too fast—the reader is in a factory, on a turnpike, in Tiger Stadium, in a law court, somewhere listening to blues and jazz or reading the underground press—but the scope of the work conveys the message that the elements of life are inextricably fused. Poems by b.p. flanagan, along with photographs of Detroit in the last few years, reinforce the thesis that class is culture, and culture is a way of understanding the fate of the civilization through a study of its high point of contradiction.

The analytical history in the book is mostly a study of the leaders of the League of Black Revolutionary Workers, parent body of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) and the other "RUM" factory caucuses that gained attention in the early 1970s. The story begins with the formation of the *Inner-City Voice*, a community newspaper with a monthly circulation of more than 10,000, by a group of young, independent black radicals who shared an alienation from most of the old Left and an expectation about the possible future of the black working class. The formation of DRUM and its counterparts brought together the lessons of the Civil Rights movement and the rise of Black Power (dramatized in the Detroit riots of 1967) with workers' restlessness at the conservatism and racism of the United Auto Workers' officialdom. "We were held together by personal loyalties rather than ideology," a league leader later recalled to the authors. That is a story that nearly every New Leftist can tell from his or her own experience. The league differentiated itself from the old Left as much by style as by content: activists openly identifying themselves with revolutionary slogans in the factories (for the first time, perhaps, since the Communists in the hungry 1930s) and asserting black hegemony over class struggle instead of the traditional tactics of "Black and White, Unite and Fight."

Like much of the rest of the New Left, the League of Black Revolutionary Workers experienced a sudden and heady success. One leader was elected editor of *South End*, the Wayne State University daily newspaper. Others became officials in community-action projects funded by the government and local liberal groups. The league launched a Black Star Printing Cooperative. League activists branched out into filmmaking, and put together *Finally Got The News*, probably the single outstanding "documentary" on working class activism to have come out of New Left circles. Most auspiciously, the league made contact with James Forman, the reputed former "brains" of SNCC in the early 1960s. In "Formanism," as it came to be called, New Left politics reached a climax in the black, working-class context. The authors' analysis is well worth quoting at length:

> The major organizational form was the umbrella group operating with a popular front strategy. The organizations had plans for becoming mass-membership groups; but more important than gaining members were the immediate goals of organizing conferences, workshops, and lectures and producing documents. This procedure would attract outside funding and prepare the ground for political-education classes. The end product of this program was supposed to be the creation of Frantz Fanon Institutes. . . .The approach of Fanon-Formanism was exemplified by loosely structured groups stressing psychological interpretations of social reality and the accumulation of technical skills. Formanism was less a program for moving toward power than a defensive tactic for dealing with oppression.

Under Forman's leadership, the league took on a national scope. A Black Economic Development Conference in 1969 launched plans for a multifaceted program based upon finances to be dragooned out of the white community in accordance with the demands of a "Black Manifesto" that Forman had written. A Black Workers' Congress was convened in Gary, Ind., in 1971.

Beneath the glittering expectation was an internal collapse. In a way, the league had been doomed all along in any situation short of revolutionary conditions, for like the old Industrial Workers of the World it preached hostility toward all existing institutions and thereby failed to provide itself with any stable base. Ultra-revolutionary sloganeering and the frequent assertion of race interests in virtual replacement of class interests at the factory-floor level alienated the allies that any potentially victorious strategy would require. League activists had themselves at first resisted the splash of national publicity, fearing the same fate as the Black Panthers—not only repression but a media saturation that blinded activists to the necessity for patient, local organizing. But unable to expand their initial support, they, too, finally chose show over substance.

The authors' lucid description of personalities and events suggests elements universal in the degeneration of the New Left. Across the movement, the collapse of dreams for participatory democracy, leading in a linear process from the realm of necessity to that of freedom, turned activists toward a guaranteed strategy, discipline and leadership in a dry-as-dust "Marxism-Leninism." Activists and thinkers battled for a new rhetoric and lost, as their abstractions drifted far away from the problems of organizing in the United States of the 1960s and 70s.

Georgakas and Surkin look beyond the league's debacle to other manifestations in Detroit that are larger and more important than any single political tendency. The election of Justin Ravitz, "Marxist Judge of the Recorders' Court," is an important victory in the struggle which found former league activists, among others, challenging the legal system from within. The elections of the black liberal Mayor, Coleman Young, and even more of the black judge, George Crockett, are in a sense the vindication of an older generation of Left-liberal battles to force recognition of black presence and power in Detroit. The UAW

Paul Buhle founded and until 1973 edited the New Left journal, Radical America. *He is co-editor of a bulletin of critical perspectives on popular culture,* Cultural Correspondence.

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sponsorship of the recent March in Washington—limited and grudging as the UAW leadership was—is yet another example. Georgakas and Surkin suggest that the course toward a resurgent Socialist movement is complex and long term, within as well as outside existing institutions. A corollary implication might be that the distance separating different generations of the Left is now smaller than it has been since the early 1960s.

Detroit: I Do Mind Dying is important, finally, because it helps to make sense of a historic phase of battles won and lost, but *lived*, part of a cumulative revolutionary experience. Georgakas and Surkin show the culture of a movement, its personalities, its verve and its final lack of depth in the perspective of the long haul. The superficiality of any specific element of the American Left is, as the authors imply, no necessary indication of irrelevance to the nation's intellectual life as a whole. As the Left-Socialist agitator Frank Bohn warned in 1910, superficiality is natural in a young and fast-paced country with no certain traditions: "It affects the Socialist movement, the newspapers, the magazines, the professions, and the arts. . . . But out of the blundering chaos in our labor movement and the sap-soaked adolescence of American radical intellectuals grows our Socialist movement. Where else should it spring from?" Our position today, even within an aging empire, is not so different, nor should we expect it to be. The road will be difficult. But *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* is a beacon in its clarity, its illumination of the revolutionary possibilities that remain within the society. □

Labor Militancy, Union Democracy

RANK AND FILE: Personal Histories of Working-Class Organizers. *Edited by Alice and Staughton Lynd. Beacon Press. 296 pp. $12.95. Paper $3.95.*

JAMES GREEN

This remarkable collection of "personal histories" includes twenty-two interviews with militant working-class organizers, most of whom were active in the 1930s and 1940s. These rank-and-file "oral histories" have been lovingly compiled and skillfully edited by Alice and Staughton Lynd, two experienced radicals whose earlier books about anti-war activists, *We Won't Go* and *The Resistance*, established them as leading chroniclers of contemporary radical movements. Like many of the most dedicated people in the New Left, the Lynds have turned their organizing energies toward the working class.

Rank and File is one of the best works of oral history produced by those radical historians who have adopted a personal approach to the past in recent years. Like Theodore Rosengarten's outstanding oral history of an Alabama tenant farmer named Nate Shaw, *All God's Dangers*, *Rank and File* respects the integrity of the individual life story. Unlike some recent oral histories, which present rather fragmentary interviews with working-class people, *Rank and File* tries to provide a meaningful look at the life story of each worker. The "personal" aspect of these rank-and-file histories helps to explain why certain workers became militant organizers. Like Studs Terkel's interviews in *Working*, the Lynds' oral histories provide striking documentation of alienation and oppression on the job, but they also provide fascinating information on another dimension of working-class experience—class struggle. Because *Rank and File* is more interested in explaining how workers struggle than in explaining how they suffer, it will undoubtedly be of great interest to a wide range of activists.

The title of the book is significant. According to the editors, "rank and file refers to workers on the job, not paid union leadership," and "rank-and-file activity means people on the job taking whatever action they think is necessary, doing something for themselves rather than waiting for someone else to do it for them." These interviews uncover a "democratic impulse" in the labor movement that was lost after World War II and now seems to be reappearing among the rank and file in unions like the United Mine Workers. The Lynds pointedly conclude their book with a conversation involving three militant West Virginia Miners for Democracy. The working-class men and women interviewed by Alice and Staughton Lynd are described as "travelers who, after long journeying, still believe that all men and women can live as brothers and sisters and still affirm that democracy must be made to work in the plants and offices where Americans work." The Lynds found these workers very "encouraging friends" in seeking their own way "from the movement of the 1960s into the very different movement which the 1970s will require."

Several interesting themes run through these personal histories. One is the importance of historical tradition in workers' lives. Both Christine Ellis and Stella Nowicki, resourceful Communist organizers in Chicago during the 1930s and 1940s, stress the influence that militant coal miners had upon them when they were young, while Sylvia Woods, a black UAW leader, emphasizes the militancy she inherited from her father's unionism and their friends' Garveyite nationalism. Wayne Kennedy, a railway clerk, describes the deep personal hatred that evolved out of "railroad history." For example, some old-timers still refuse to talk to the scabs who started working during the 1922 shopmen's strike. "You'd think the Pullman strike was yesterday, the way the old-timers would talk about it," he declares. "They hated the engineers" who "never supported the other workers," says Kennedy. "Class conflict just dominated everything."

Another theme in *Rank and File* is that of job actions and other forms of nonunion resistance on the shop floor. For instance, Stella Nowicki, a meat packer, explains how she and her fellow workers set a limit on bacon production at Swift and Company by training newcomers not to exceed 144 packages per hour.

> They maintained that limit and they did it without a union. One smart aleck girl came in there and she was going to show them and go beyond that number because she wanted to earn more money: all the bacon that she got from girls further up the line was messed up and scrappy and she'd have to straighten it up and put it in the package. She couldn't make a hundred packages an hour. (We took a loss just to show her.)

The women in Nowicki's packing plant also fooled the time checker by "using a lot of extra motions" when a time-motion study was in progress. "When he wasn't there, we eliminated all those motions and did it simply," Stella recalls. "There is always a faster way to do something, a simple way where you save time and energy." And the older, more experienced women were always willing to teach the younger workers who were willing to learn. There was, Stella Nowicki remarks, a "tremendous relationship of solidarity" in her plant, even before the CIO union was organized in the 1930s.

Stan Weir, who organized on the West Coast as a sailor and auto worker, explains that rank-and-file workers wage many struggles on the shop floor that have nothing to do with the unions. After organizing for left-wing unions and political parties, Weir discovered the importance of what he calls the "informal work group." Although it was not organized in the usual sense of the term, the "family at work" gave the workers who toiled side by side a sense of solidarity and a chance to engage in collective activity of various kinds. A strong critic of bureaucratic unionism, Weir believes that the future of democratic organizing lies in these "informal work groups," "where the muscle of the workers is."

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Stan Weir's criticisms of official union leadership are echoed by the other workers the Lynds interviewed. In fact, opposition to the labor union bureaucracies is the most pervasive theme in the book. In the introduction the editors insist that the organizers they interviewed are not "anti-union," but clearly the workers who speak in this book are all militantly opposed to the undemocratic officialdom that reigns in most unions today.

The depressing story of union bureaucratization is told in many of these personal histories. Jesse Reese, a black steelworker who organized for the Communist Party, describes this process most vividly when he says, "today we have in our unions a pet dog," led by company caretakers who have fed the dog red bait and then pulled out its teeth with the no-strike pledge. "Your dog don't bite no more," Reese tells his fellow workers. "So the thing you can get to win now is a cat, and it's got to be a wildcat, organized as a blanket matter . . . to keep from being exposed."

This theme is taken up forcefully by other steelworkers like John Sargent and Nick Migas, who led militant local opposition to one of the most undemocratic labor bureaucracies in the United States. Their fellow worker, Mario Manzardo, an organizer in steel in the late 1930s who saw his union become a "training ground" for some superintendents and foremen, represented the essence of *Rank and File*'s message when he made this comment on the autobiography of David McDonald, the powerful ex-president of the Steelworkers' union:

> He claimed everything in the first person: "I did this, and I did that." He didn't do any of these things. It was all done by other people, mostly local leaders, rank and filers, radicals among them. He didn't single-handedly organize. This is history twisted around. . . . History is where you show that workers through their militancy, their picket lines or their demands or their continuous agitation, forced an issue.

For readers who want to see an alternative view to official trade union history, in which labor leaders take the center stage, *Rank and File* is the place to begin. These personal histories of rank-and-file organizers show how ordinary working-class men and women made their own history and, as Alice and Staughton Lynd suggest, their stories offer encouragement to those who hope that those men and women will create a new, democratic labor movement. □

Intimations of the End

THE MEMOIRS OF A SURVIVOR. *By Doris Lessing. Alfred A. Knopf. 213 pp. $6.95.*

CELIA BETSKY

I have always thought of Doris Lessing as a displaced person. Her work expresses rootlessness and restlessness, her characters anxiety, restiveness, dissatisfaction; they are the D.P.s of our modern condition. At the heart of Lessing's work lies the guilt of the colonial, the unease of Europeans who love and hate Africa, who live but do not belong there. Impostors, too, are those who return to England, uncomfortable exiles wherever they go. And in the Martha Quest series, or books like *The Golden Notebook* and *The Summer Before the Dark*, the stories are of women who, rebelling against social restrictions, break out into—a void. As interlopers, her unusual men and women become martyrs to their own uniqueness, experiencing the world as an indefinite condition, making the fatal discovery of the extraordinariness of the ordinary. Born herself in Persia of wandering parents, Lessing has been roaming and searching ever since.

Much of her search has ended, many of her questions have been provided with conclusions in her new novel, *The Memoirs of a Survivor.* That is strange, because the story is about the future, where now the "ordinariness of the extraordinary" has taken hold. Yet in the chaos of this imagined future, in the hiatus between two eerily unspecified disasters, Lessing takes a definite, if disillusioned, stand on a number of issues she has made vital before: the lot of women, sexual relations, the problem of community, the problem of social behavior and personal morality, the price of maturity, the plight of the individual. For Lessing, this book of speculation about the years to come is an occasion for ruminating on traditional roles and assumptions. Life will go on as the world falls apart.

One human tendency—frequently a human failure—is the need to form groups. Groups, both natural and organized, have always won Lessing's contempt. Obeisance to class or family loyalty, the communal conformity of social clubs and political parties, endless afternoons spent by women tied to tea and gossip, Europeans pitted against Africans, young generation against old, male against female—all of these deny individuality and throw up impenetrable barriers. In Lessing's future, the group mentality has spawned bands of roving teen-agers, later joined by adults, all willing to shirk responsibility for mass action and mass destruction. In the eyes of Lessing's nameless woman narrator, they have

> . . . relinquished individuality, that was the point, individual judgment and responsibility, and this showed in a hundred ways, not least by one's instinctive reaction in an encounter with them, which was always a sharp apprehension, for one knew that in a confrontation—if it came to that—there would be a pack judgment.

It is rule by the horde, and terrorization, an extension of perceptions articulated in Lessing's other books. The outrage to any kind of privacy, the insult to human dignity, swell menacingly under the gaze of a novelist who, in literature and in life, seeks the "small personal voice."

The collapse of communication is also exacerbated by the circumstances of tomorrow. Incomprehension reigns between different segments of the population, and between them and the authorities. These last are the "Talkers," manipulators of a post-Watergate rhetoric, who fly far above the troubles of a disintegrating earth, holding conferences which solve nothing. Language is the casualty in the game the narrator sees everyone playing, a charade against a hated power structure—and against themselves. The only thing shared is the premonition that some terminal event is at hand, a pall of anticipation. The fragmentation of the English language, emblematic of the class distinctions Lessing has persistently taken to task, has exploded into open hostility and class warfare. Most severe, however, is the shock administered to the parasitical behavior she earlier discerned in the most "proper" of marriages, relationships, lives. Relentless cannibals, her gangs feed upon their fellow human beings.

In the midst of a confused time lives a woman, Lessing's narrator. Afflicted with disorientation, she is anchored by the sudden presence of responsibility. A young girl, Emily, is one day brought to her apartment by a stranger and left there. In dealing with this child-woman's struggles, Lessing too achieves a bleak stability. Emily goes through the difficulties of growing up, the trials of sexuality, first love and close friendship, and the assumption of a mother's role for a band of younger children.

Having explored the poignancies of adolescence in so much of her autobiographical fiction, Lessing draws here a tragicomic portrait of that stage, accelerated as she thinks it will be by the disturbed tempo of the times. Lessing herself left school when she was 14, and learned from "the classics" and from life. There are no schools left for Emily. She, too, learns from life, but that life is bankrupt. For her,

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responsibility is a burden, not a blessing. She is an "anachronism," with her drive to save and salvage, to help and protect others. This urge restores to her guardian a sense of humanity, as it has made of Lessing a somewhat unwilling patron saint to people (especially feminists) everywhere. Caring for others can be debilitating as well as restorative; Emily is the most recent in a long line of stoically self-destructive Lessing heroines. Watching her suffer under and give into the demands of love, the narrator sees decades of feminism contradicted and finally reversed; observing the girl's forays into the outside world, she realizes that the tyranny of the majority has usurped the place of cooperation. Lessing passes sad judgment on the future of such cherished causes as feminism and socialism.

Lessing's future is all the more terrifying because it is so close; the horrors awaiting us will spring directly from the ruin we now know and choose to ignore. Lessing projects total breakdown, but not, as she said of *The Golden Notebook*, as part of a "healing" process. Her view is entirely pessimistic. The future is the nullification of all progress; even her own work has circled back on itself, for the conditions she rejected in her childhood have grown nightmarish in the future. Lessing can envision only a mystical escape from that existence—a flight into an ambiguous paradise of annihilation. But we are awaited by the purgatory of the future Lessing's characters leave behind as the afterlife of our civilization, punishment for the domination of some human beings by others in her Africa, the mistreatment of others in the neurotic, uncaring wastes of her England. Whether she is foreseeing this world or the next, Lessing leaves the "end" vague. She forces upon us the most harrowing of apocalypses: the necessity of creating out of our fears an end that we must imagine and face on our own. □

Society Is the Human Condition

THE IDEA OF FRATERNITY IN AMERICA. *By Wilson Carey McWilliams. The University of California Press. 695 pp. $14.95. Paper $4.95.*

HAVEN BRADFORD GOW

What impels man to enter into society? Is society natural or artificial? Such questions have interested human beings ever since they began pondering the riddles of man and the universe. But these questions seem to be of special and urgent interest today. Our own age, it seems, is obsessed with a quest for community; the evidences are everywhere around us. We observe them in the various political, ethnic, economic and social groupings, in increasingly communal styles of living, and in the literature and philosophy of our times.

Our search for community, suggests Wilson Carey McWilliams, is a reaction to the atomistic individualism which permeates contemporary American society, and which is traceable to the Lockean foundations of our civil social order. According to Professor McWilliams, the influence of the liberal, Lockean tradition on American social, economic and political life is manifest in our inordinate emphasis on self-interest based upon the belief that man is by nature a private, asocial and apolitical being; in the belief that politics is "the result of scarcity and conflict," and that "the logical aim of politics lies in limiting conflict" while we pursue material well-being and our private, selfish interests; and finally in the conviction that the checks and balances of the competitive process are the best mechanism for facilitating the pursuit of our private, selfish interests.

In previous times, McWilliams argues, religious tradition tempered the harshness of the Lockean traditions of our civil social order. The religious tradition emphasized the importance of fraternity and provided a sense of genuine community based upon shared values and goals. Unhappily, the older institutions and customs which furnished a social base for the religious tradition have been slowly eroded. And although the cultivation of fraternity and a sense of genuine community, McWilliams tells us, is "a permanent social and psychological necessity of human development," it is "discouraged and inhibited by the institutions and processes of our modern industrial society."

Although we have had a strong religious tradition in our own country, our public institutions, as McWilliams notes, have been based upon the assumptions and theories of the liberal Enlightenment. Our social, economic and political systems contain "a bias toward individualism, a hostility to communities, an assumption that material well-being and technological advances are in the high interests of man." The liberal, Lockean tradition proposed to discard fraternity as a necessary means to human development and as a norm in everyday social and political life. Indeed, that tradition shunted aside the belief that man is a social and political animal who requires civic relations for his perfection. With the erosion of commitment to the old religious tradition, the author believes, the liberal tradition and its stress on a competitive ethos, its concern for material power and its atomistic individualism have come to permeate all aspects of American life with disastrous consequences. One such consequence is the sense of isolation—social and spiritual—that is felt by increasing numbers of Americans.

It is obvious that the author of *The Idea of Fraternity in America* rejects the notion of the "omnicompetent individual," the notion that the individual—if unfettered by government—is, in the words of John

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Dewey, "competent to frame policies, to judge their results; competent to know in all situations demanding political action what is for his own good, and competent to enforce his idea of good and the will to effect it against contrary forces."

Implicit in the atomistic individualism that McWilliams rejects is the assumption that society is artificial. From the liberal, Lockean perspective, man enters society out of fear and greed; man enters society as a means of self-preservation. Society is, at best, a necessary evil. In sharp contrast to this view of social life is St. Thomas' view that society is natural, that it arises from the demands of man's higher nature. Man has natural inclinations toward social life; he enters society to share friendship, love, knowledge and the pursuit of the common good.

McWilliams comes very close to saying that man is naturally social when he points out that fraternity is a "permanent social and psychological necessity," and when he suggests that man is a social and political animal who requires civic relations for his perfection; yet he does not explicitly say so. McWilliams would perhaps be offended by the suggestion that he seems Thomistic, but when he writes about our need for fraternity, he is simply restating Thomas' belief that man is by nature social. The author of *The Idea of Fraternity in America* is sensitive to the demands of the human spirit; he recognizes, as Thomas recognized, that human beings need one another, and that society responds to the demand of man's nature for friendship, love, marriage, family. He knows, as Thomas knew, that social life can help to satisfy this demand, and thus he stresses fraternity as a necessary means to human perfection and to the common good.

Clearly, McWilliams has given us a valuable and important work, one which brilliantly restates a much-needed view of man and society. □

THE LAST CHANCE

The myna bird speaks
of love. His whistle
cuts into the bone
ears of a white-tail's
head stuffed above
the bar.

Fifty miles the county's
dry. You stop here
to tell yourself
go home, but hear
the black experience
of a goddamned bird

whose hello sucks
at the marrow
of your bones.
You wonder how a soul
can pass from
his beak and break

upon your face, split
the whiskers you grew
to be wise in. You wonder
at his avalanche of words,
the last drink you took,
the dance on your skin

you can't beat time to.
You wonder, but you
do not ask. You
listen hard with
your cracking eyes.
He asks about your life.

You tell him lies
while he prunes
a feather, lets it drop.
Your life is sour
in the glass. Crow
made the earth and all

things therein, brought fire.
This bird's a ghost
you tell your sins.
Nobody is listening.
Outside, the sun falls
into the brittle grass.

Jim Barnes

Political Woman—The New Broom?

POLITICAL WOMAN. *By Jeane J. Kirkpatrick. Basic Books. 274 pp. $10.*

CLOUT, WOMANPOWER AND POLITICS. *By Susan and Martin Tolchin. Coward, McCann & Geoghegan. 320 pp. $10.*

WOMEN IN POLITICS. *Edited by Jane S. Jacquette. John Wiley & Sons. 367 pp. $14.95.*

MARY TOPOLSKY

A time of grace might be an apt description for the period which women in politics are now enjoying. The stunning victories of 1974 are past; quiet satisfaction has replaced all the shouting. Quiet satisfaction is a good mood in which to take stock and plan for the future—the more so because there isn't really much time.

The year 1974 was the "Year of the Woman" in politics, but it was the year of Watergate as well. This wasn't just a coincidence, nor should it be interpreted solely as an opportunity for self-congratulation by the feminist movement. Certainly the victors deserve the satisfaction of a hard-earned victory. However, it is in order to be realistic. A society that is not functioning well may not be in a position to uphold the standards it used to consider sacred. Watergate illustrated how poorly our government is functioning: that is why women were allowed in. The familiar story of the stranger in a white hat who rides into town, outdraws the bad guys, and then leaves town again should serve in this case as a cautionary tale. Fortunately, women do not want to ride out of town. But that means confronting a situation of political deterioration which worked for them by allowing them in, in the first place, but which in the long run may be the downfall not just of women but of everyone.

"If she were a man, I would have belted her!" was the way one New Jersey legislator reacted to Sen. Aline Ammon's behavior in office. This bizarre statement is an illustration of why women are enjoying a period of grace for the moment. The fact is that the techniques used to keep legislators in line are masculine ones and are not suitable tools for use against women. These books provide illustrations of what I mean. A woman state legislator tells Mrs. Kirkpatrick that women are not impressed by being taken to dinner by male lobbyists—she herself has been taken on dinner dates since she was 13, she says, and does not expect to pay her own check. Furthermore, she'd rather be dining at home with her family. Another example is provided in the Tolchins' book, *Clout,* in which Joie Prevost, who is in charge of dispensing patronage for Mayor Kevin White of Boston, is described as a former beauty queen. She is used to all the compliments and flattery, the Tolchins suggest, and she has learned just what such things are worth. In a sense, she has had ideal training for her office.

At the same time, women in politics have themselves changed. *Political Woman* describes a group of women who are Representatives in state legislatures. These are frequently part-time, low-paying offices where the range of decisions, like the capacities of the officeholders, is fairly narrow. In this situation it is not uncommon to find women who have come to office, not as men frequently do through their professional commitments, the most typical being the law, but rather through their roles as volunteers in their communities. Therefore, their ties with specific economic interests

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are likely to be indirect, and many of them are capable of a great deal of independence in the face of economic pressures—and of partisan political pressure as well. Indeed, they are often in office despite, not because of, the party. On the average, they are also considerably older than the men and must renounce more grandiose ambitions for small, practical gains. Those legislators tend to see their roles as an extension of their volunteer work and they tend to consider it a Representative's job to serve his or her community.

But the new crop of political women are generally younger, more aggressive, professionally trained, self-supporting and ambitious for higher office. They are primarily concerned with demands to be made upon the state, whether for the Equal Rights Amendment, equal pay, equal employment opportunities, equal educational opportunities or day-care centers. In other words, they behave like male legislators. The trouble is that male legislators haven't been particularly successful in dealing with most current problems, that of corruption being an outstanding example.

According to the current litany, the solution to corruption in government is to divest oneself of all economic ties with special interests through a series of dubious legal gadgets, such as blind trusts. Even assuming what is unlikely, the efficacy of such measures, we are still faced with a problem. If male lawmakers renounce their economic interests, what meaningful ties to their constituents can we assume? In the case of women legislators, they have often substituted bonds with the community as a whole for commercial ones. Clearly, they see themselves as servants to the needs and wishes of their districts. In that way they provide a model for an alternative approach to the traditional ways in which legislators conduct themselves in office. And that model could be a significant contribution of the feminist movement, since it is based upon the political experience of women, and is not simply a mimicry of masculine failures. □

Crusaders with a Lens

MINAMATA. *By W. Eugene Smith and Aileen M. Smith. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 192 pp. $10.*

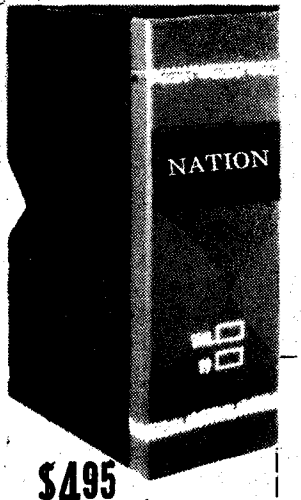
THOMAS HAYES

As a dedicated and successful photojournalist, W. Eugene Smith has helped shape the myths of modern culture. Having set out to communicate his personal vision of the "truth," Smith has lived to see his own existence mythologized. This myth, for which Smith himself is only partially responsible, is that of the idealistic, *Angst*-ridden artist plagued by self-doubt and existential despair who searches the world for worthy causes illustrating the heroic spirit of mankind. The sensationalized and sentimentalized legend of Eugene Smith began during World War II when, as a photographer for *Life*, he covered the Pacific invasions and brought home to millions the hellish poignancy of Saipan, Guam, Tokyo and Iwo Jima before being severely wounded on Okinawa. After the war he completed a series of brilliant interpretative photo-essays and became famous as the man who sensitively dramatized the work of the rural physician, Dr. Ceriani (1948), and the quiet dedication of the South Carolina nurse-midwife Maude Callen (1953); he portrayed the haunting majesty of primitive Spain (1951) and made the selfless labor of Albert Schweitzer known to the general public (1954).

After resigning from *Life* in a dispute over an artist's right to control the manner in which his work is to be used, Smith undertook assignments in Pittsburgh, New York City and Haiti. The brooding, introspective quality of his pictures of these years added to Smith's image as a compassionate but "difficult" man following the footsteps of great American documentary photographers such as Jacob Riis, Lewis Hine, Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange. But Smith continued to grow intellectually, emotionally and artistically. Through his photographs we are able to see a man coming to grips with his own psyche and the world around him. For, to him, photography is a way of extending and heightening our awareness of reality. His work therefore transcends mere cathartic value. Exploring one's individual consciousness is a solitary and insular undertaking and, through his photography and his teaching, Smith has always reached out to others. His pictures function not just as metaphors of his own interior landscape; they are distillations, and thus intensifications, of human experience capable of touching all who would take the time to see and understand them.

Persisting in his attempt to resolve the contradictions besetting a serious artist in a competitive and exploitative society, Smith organized a large and as yet unpublished book tentatively entitled *The Walk to Paradise Garden.* But the political turbulence of the 1960s apparently affected him greatly, for he turned from contemplation to action. He participated in anti-Vietnam war marches and visited Woodstock Nation. In 1969 Aperture Monographs published a collection of his pictures along with a condescending and puerile afterword by Lincoln Kirstein suggesting that Smith is "possibly hysterical" and "insane." Yet, typically, while this myth was being disseminated, Smith had already moved far beyond it. For, beginning in 1961, he found in his work in Japan an outlet for expressing his concern and anxiety over the world's problems by immersing himself in a culture quite foreign to him yet with similar social, economic, political and moral dilemmas.

Thomas Hayes is a member of The SoHo Photo Gallery in New York City where he exhibits his work.



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THE FROG

I hold this living coldness,
this gland with eyes, mouth, feet,
shattered mirror of all creatures,
pulsing smile of fish, serpent and man,
just as I caught him most of my life ago
in the sawdust of the icehouse.

I could not believe in him if he were not here,
that he came from unwelcome phlegm
from black eggs strung through a swirl of water
settled in an unseen place.
A head that was also a tail broke out,
the first slight current taught his tail to swim.

Perhaps out of love of new sensation
or in a dream of being devoured,
by a thing part muskrat, part giant bass,
he moved into the shallowest water,
the sky and green branches above the stream
became familiar, feet grew out of him,
his tail fell off,
his lungs blew up with summer air.

The sound of his call is too large for his body:
"irrelevant, irrelevant, irrelevant."
Once in the dry countries he was a god.

Stanley Moss

This involvement inevitably led him to the little fishing village of Minamata.

Many Americans know that Smith went to Minamata to photograph the inhabitants' struggle against the large chemical corporation, Chisso, which polluted the fishing waters with organic mercury, causing a particularly horrible disease. Extensive media coverage of the savage beating Smith suffered at the hands of company guards on January 7, 1972, while covering a demonstration at the Goi factory, fleetingly dramatized the seriousness of what was happening in Minamata. Predictably, the company charged that Smith had become "hysterical" and hurt himself. The story quickly grew that Smith had gone there looking for trouble and had found it, that he had joined a group of "radicals" in their attempt to destroy the Establishment and had finally succeeded in becoming a martyr for the ecology movement. The truth, however, is both more interesting and more flattering to Smith.

First, Smith and his wife Aileen—daughter of a Japanese mother and an American father—did not go to Minamata to join in a protest. In fact the furore over the 1959 "discovery" that organic mercury from the company's acetaldehyde process was causing the "strange disease" affecting several hundred poor fishermen and their families had, by the time the Smiths arrived, almost completely dissipated. They were told before they left the United States that the crisis was over, that the victims were "pacified," that the company had paid all medical expenses and had ceased polluting the waters with mercury, and that most of the residents of the area wished to forget about the "unfortunate incident."

All of this was true. Still, the Smiths moved to Minamata and began investigating the circumstances surrounding the entire history of methyl-mercury poisoning; more important, they also began to integrate themselves into the lives of the people, particularly those who had suffered most from the strange disease. As the people saw that they had come not just to stare and moralize, to wring their hands and walk away, but to participate and actually help them, they allowed the Smiths to see them more fully as human beings. Slowly, the Smiths began sorting out the complex issues involved and the myriad responses to them.

They learned that from as far back as 1925 Chisso had paid Minamata fishermen a very small indemnity for damage to their fishing area. In 1932 Chisso began the acetaldehyde process that dumped mercury waste into the water. The first clear case of the strange disease was reported in 1953. By 1956 the disease had become an epidemic. In October 1959 Dr. Hajime Hosokowa, a chemist in Chisso's own laboratories, proved that the disease was caused by organic mercury emitted from the company's effluent. For the next nine years the company hid this proof but continued to pay small indemnities to disease victims without admitting culpability. In effect, the company bought off anyone who threatened to make a fuss. Then, in 1967, after a similar outbreak of organic poisoning in another part of Japan, a few people won a court case against a different chemical company. Two years later twenty-nine Minamata families filed suit against Chisso. The trial lasted four years, and during this time many more victims of the disease began to come forward. They were led by a charismatic figure, much like Cesar Chavez, named Teruo Kawamoto. In Smith's words: "the trial group (composed of 'old' pre-1959 patients) and the explosive 'direct negotiations' group (composed of more recently verified 'new' patients) together shaped a magnificent, turbulent, tradition-breaking struggle."

Clearly, the Smiths' political attitudes were changed by their increasing engagement in the fight to force Chisso to accept moral and legal responsibility for the disease victims. In the beginning the Smiths were tentative and suspicious about some of the group's methods. Halfway through the book Smith notes that "at times, it appeared to me that they [the Kawamoto group] could be doing more harm than good, might be alienating the public by behaving as 'irresponsible radicals.' " Yet after innumerable protests, confrontations, demonstrations and defections, after Dr. Hosokowa's deathbed confession that Chisso knew it caused the disease from 1959, and after the trial verdict on March 20, 1973, awarding the plaintiffs (but not all victims) $60,000 to $68,000 apiece, Aileen is there two days later when Kawamoto and Shimada (Chisso's president) meet face to face for the first time. By now the Smiths have become one with the "radicals." At this point they act not as impassive observers or even as biased reporters but as instruments of the people. Significantly, when a newly verified patient, after a week of frustrating negotiations, got up and slashed his wrist with a broken ashtray and Shimata collapsed into agreement to pay all the victims the full allowance, the camera focuses on Chisso's president, not the victim. By early 1975 Chisso had paid out more than $80 million.

This book is more than an incisive piece of photojournalism. It graphically illustrates how two committed artists can function in the real world of events and help bring about positive change. Through their intense concern for the people of Minamata the Smiths demonstrate that their purpose is not to idolize human misery and suffering. (The book contains as much joy and irony as sorrow and pathos.) Inevitably the vivid photographs of the more deformed disease victims have attracted the most attention, especially the powerful Pietà-like image of a mother

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bathing her badly crippled child. And this is perhaps as it should be, for these pictures may make people more quickly aware than anything else of the Smiths' warning that humankind must "assume true responsibility for its stewardship of this planet." Combining creative vitality with technical expertise, this passionate document challenges its readers to grasp the importance of what happened at Minamata. For this is not just the story of a small Japanese fishing village struck by tragedy; it is an omen of things to come. □

THEATRE

HENRY POPKIN

Last season, Peter Brook came down from the mountain, bringing with him two new productions which he staged in an old hulk of a torn-up theatre in a working-class section of Paris. He took the town by storm—with the wrong show, I think—but I was as glad as anyone to see him come out of hiding. Ever since his spectacularly successful *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (on Broadway early in 1971) and his multilingual extravaganza *Orghast* in Shiraz, Iran (later that year), Brook had stayed out of the limelight. His three years in Paris, working privately with his International Center for Theatre Research, were broken only by journeys to Africa, California (where he visited Luis Valdez's Chicano theatre) and Brooklyn (where his actors performed *The Conference of the Birds*).

After all the silence and the travels, the Paris public was entitled to expect something a little special. What it got was Brook's international company in two of the plainest of plays, plain in speech, plain in spectacle, disarmingly direct in execution. It is easy enough to connect these shows with Brook's recent experiments in language; they are deliberate exercises in the use of the simplest speech. But they have something else in common—a social theme. The "social" Brook has surfaced previously with Peter Weiss's *Marat-Sade* and *The Investigation* and with a play about Vietnam called *US*; still, most of us associate him mainly with technical experiments, and so it is a novelty to see him do two plays about the devastating effects of poverty.

Most Parisians considered the first offering, *Timon of Athens*, to be the main event. Years ago, Brook first won international attention with a big, star-studded version of another of Shakespeare's lesser tragedies, *Titus Andronicus*. Give the man credit for a change of pace. This time he applied himself to not being big.

Brook has been seeking a way to do Shakespeare with his international company, which speaks three dead languages and one invented one (called "Orghast") in *Orghast*. Make them all speak a living language and you put some of them at a disadvantage, unless you choose a tongue like Urdu or Patagonian, which would be equally strange to all of them. At one point, Brook had Ted Hughes, the poet and inventor of Orghast, translating *King Lear* into plain, unpoetic, contemporary basic English—apparently on the assumption that foreign accents would be less ruinous to prosaic dialogue. Finally, he settled for Jean-Claude Carrière's translation of *Timon of Athens*, which is probably Shakespeare's least poetic tragedy, into unpoetic contemporary French.

He gave it a low-keyed production in this ripped-up shambles of a theatre. The stage had been torn out so that the actors would have to perform on an apron area (where the choicest orchestra seats had once been), surrounded on three sides by the audience, in the Elizabethan manner. The shape of the playing area influenced the visual pattern of the action: the actors were continually forming semicircles or moving in semicircles around the periphery of the apron. As a frequent visitor to the apron stages of Stratford, Ontario and Minneapolis, I found that strange. Actors do not go around making semicircles on those stages. Equally strange was the gaping hole where the stage used to be, containing only pathways in space by which the actors might come and go.

Brook was obviously aiming at intimacy—and achieving it. In the first scene it was impossible to distinguish the actors (in relatively modern dress) from the spectators crouching around the edge of the playing area. Gesturing at the audience, a character identified us with the *"grande confluence"* attending Timon's dinner parties. Actors stood in the back of the theatre when they were not working and, during intermission, getting a drink at the bar on the corner, along with the rest of us, was apparently compulsory for them.

The ripped-up theatre helped make the staging Elizabethan, but it surely had another significance as well. Brook could have had painters and plasterers in to make the interior look more presentable; he chose not to. By being deliberately and excessively messy, the theatre testified to poverty—not the poverty of Brook's company making do on its French subsidy and its foundation grants but the poverty of Timon once his fortune failed him, and also the moral shabbiness of his fair-weather friends.

Brook's young actors bravely aimed at an intensity that tended to be just a little beyond them. Their modern dress was well suited to Shakespeare's timeless Athens, which had somehow borrowed its senators from Rome. To play men with "old" personalities—rich men, bill collectors, senators—these actors put on "old" articles of clothing—frock coats, vests, hats. At least Timon and his faithful servant Flavius earned the sympathy they deserved, and Flavius contributed the play's most exciting moment with his flight (naturally, in a semicircular direction) from a gang of bill collectors. Mlick Bagayogo, an African from Mali, did best of all in the role of the cynic Apemantus. His Apemantus was a shabby tramp with a burlap bag slung over his shoulder, and over that shoulder he seemed always to be casting his last bitter insults at Timon just before setting out on the open road—and then he would invariably turn up for another scene.

Anyone who thought that *Timon* could not be done (and that included most Paris theatregoers) found this *Timon* to be a revelation. My trouble was that, ten years ago, I had seen the definitive grown-up *Timon*, directed by John Schlesinger and with Paul Scofield in the lead, at Stratford-on-Avon, and so I regarded this one as no more than a nice try.

Timon's more compelling companion piece, *Les Iks*, opened later and, for want of an audience, closed earlier. This is Jean-Claude Carrière's French version of a dramatization, by Colin Higgins and Denis Cannan, of Colin W. Turnbull's *The Mountain People*. Turnbull, a British anthropologist, made a close study of a Ugandan tribe of hunters who had been forbidden to hunt, on the ground that wild life is more important than human dignity or survival. Incapable of farming and unwilling to leave their mountains, the Iks became the dessicated victims of famine and, what was worse, their only motivation became the struggle to fill their bellies, their only standard of value their success at feeding themselves at the expense of others, their only pleasure the knowledge of some-

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one else's failure. Identifying with Turnbull the outsider, we begin by finding Ik behavior rather quaint, but the play, like the book, drives us ultimately to ask what we would do if we were Ik—whom we would betray, whom we would starve to death if we were really up against it. Watch the Ik gobbling grain and throwing up and going on gobbling because they do not wish to share their grain, watch an Ik family deliberately abandoning its idiot child to starve, hear the Ik protest when any nourishment is given (by Turnbull) to the old or the sick, and you conclude that Timon did not know when he was well off. Horrifying! And beautifully played by a company which has only two blacks in it. Most impressive of all is a Japanese actor, Katsuhiro Oida, ingratiatingly playing the wiliest of the Iks.

Brook is making a relevant contemporary comment. The disillusionment of Timon, the degradation of the Iks—that is where the depression is leading us. Help, somebody! □

MUSIC

DAVID HAMILTON

As the chief visiting dignitary at Tanglewood this summer, Olivier Messiaen received the largest share of performances at the Festival of Contemporary Music (August 10-16), sponsored by the Berkshire Music Center and the Fromm Music Foundation. The six works selected left something to be desired as a retrospective, leaning heavily on Messiaen's earlier music, with only a single representative of his post-1950 output, the colorful and unpretentious *Oiseaux exotiques*. Everything else was in part or whole redolent of that curious and fairly repellent Parsifal-and-Delilah sensibility, so strangely at odds with his constructivist compositional techniques. Still, the final night's performance of the monumentally and endearingly naive *Turangalila-Symphonie*, played with incomparable verve and color by Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony, was something not to be easily forgotten. It gave markedly more dimension to the piece than emerges from the RCA recording. As always, Yvonne and Jeanne Loriod officiated at the piano and *ondes Martenot*, respectively; although Yvonne's mode of addressing the keyboard would probably drive the entire Juilliard piano faculty up the aisles, she is in this literature a performer of spectacular authority and power. (Earlier in the week, she joined the composer in *Visions de l'Amen* and three members of the orchestra in the *Quartet for the End of Time*.)

Of the new works at Tanglewood, first attention naturally focused on Pierre Boulez's *Rituel (In memoriam: Bruno Maderna)*, which received its first American performance. Perhaps because of the coincidental juxtaposition with so much Messiaen, one was reminded of how little most of Boulez's music has resembled that of his teacher—until now. If in the older composer's work the sense of blockiness, of big chunks of material placed in almost mechanical juxtapositions and alternations, is inescapable, Boulez's previous music has offered first a surface of efflorescent detail, of fluent arabesque, with the indubitably rigorous structure much more subtly submerged.

In *Rituel*, a very blocky structural plan stands in high relief indeed; even without knowing the elaborate mechanical details of performance outlined in the program, one feels that most of the notes constitute a running in place rather than significant forward motion. The long-range business of the piece comprises a clear alternation between two types of texture. One involves small chamber groups (ranging from one oboe to a wind septet), each with an associated percussionist. Their material is written out, but the sequence and timing of entry are determined by the conductor. Alternating with this are homophonic sections involving all the chamber groups plus a large force of brass instruments. A recurring ostinato of gongs and tam-tams was, at least in this performance, led by a second conductor. Over the work's twenty-minute span, instruments and groups are added and the sections grow longer; at the end, the process is reversed until only a single note remains.

Like much recent production, *Rituel* represents music as object rather than music as narrative: a great rotating prismatic object, larger and more brilliantly lit with each turn and finally withdrawing from sight. I found it imposing but not altogether absorbing. Its colors and rhythms are muted—no doubt in deference to its memorial purpose—and perhaps intended to be hypnotic, but the simple patterns etched by all that knocking, scraping and ringing percussion did not, on this occasion, overlap to make interesting patterns, nor did the spatial distribution of the chamber groups count for much on the crowded stage.

Two of the new works commissioned by the Berkshire Music Center and the Fromm Music Foundation made powerful impressions. Joyce Mekeel's *Serena* is a sort of duodrama, in which a singer, voicing texts about sleep, night and death from many languages and authors, gradually succumbs to the incantatory blandishments of a *Doppelgänger*, speaking material along similar lines from Thomas Mann's *Joseph*; a delicate, partly "prepared" piano texture mediates this imaginatively conceived encounter. Shulamit Ran's *Ensembles for 17* buffeted a soprano singing a disjunct treatment of Othello's final speech with violent and dramatic outbursts from a chamber orchestra. An American première was Oliver Knussen's *Trumpets*, a vivid setting of a Trakl poem for mezzo and three clarinets.

Most of the older works on the programs celebrated composers' birthdays, of which this year boasts an impressive crop: Copland's 75th (the 1962 *Connotations*) and Krenek's (selections from his uncharacteristic but intriguing neo-Schubertian *Reisebuch aus den Oesterreichischen Alpen*); Berio's 50th (also anomalously, with the engaging but minor *Folksongs*) and Gunther Schuller's (his Symphony for Brass and Percussion, which will turn up again in November on the Philharmonic's schedule). The various performances, by students in the Berkshire Music Center Fellowship Program, were almost always respectable, often better than that, although *Connotations*, at the end of a long evening, suffered from both players' and listeners' fatigue. Exceptional among the many soloists was Beverly Morgan, who projected the Mekeel and Knussen pieces with accuracy, power and compelling involvement. □

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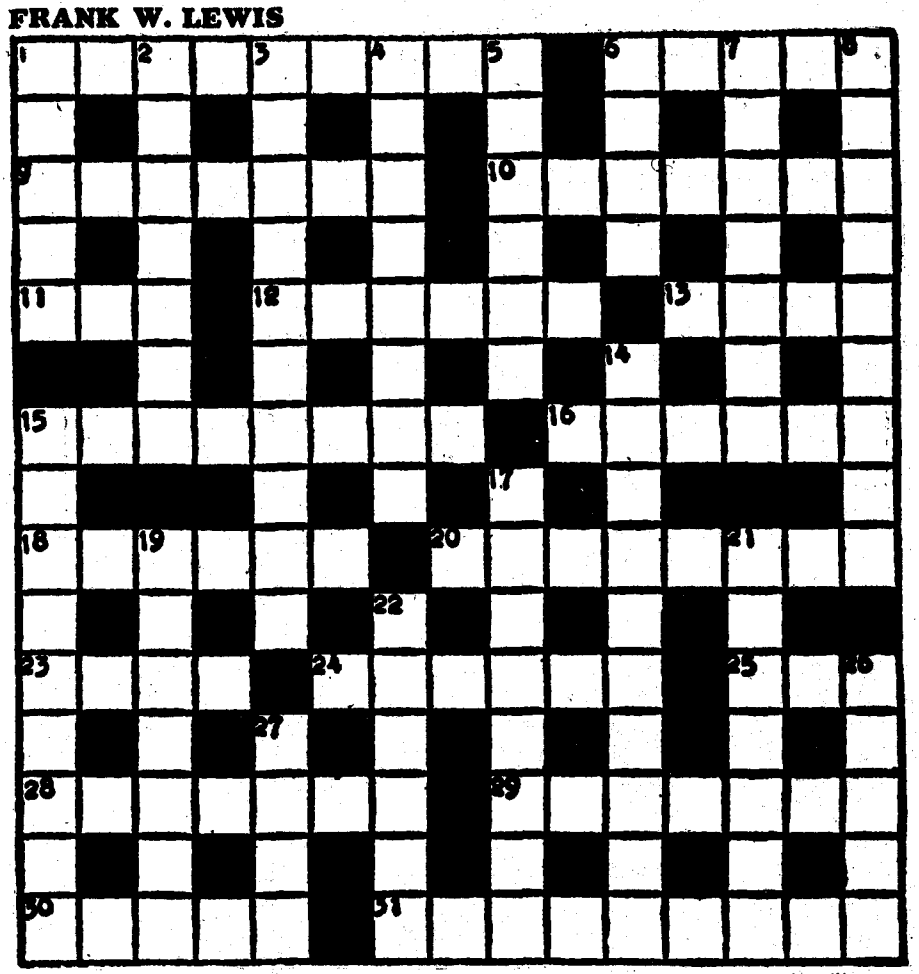
Crossword Puzzle No. 1597

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Sailor-neighbors of Chaucer's wife? One might consider them tubby. (4-5)
6 Like a porch philosopher? (5)
9 Such a fever with typhoid! (7)
10 See 15 across
11 See 30 across
12 Working on an essay, thereby causing some strain. (6)
13 Safe isn't with one, perhaps. (Especially breakfast food, after the first of the year.) (4)
15 and 10 across Some cut, for example, made by an actor. (6,2,7)
16 Low Shakespearean comedian? (6)
18 To withstand broken rest is what a movement may want to do. (6)
20 Traditionally demands representation. (You might consider it not a bad sort around a tool.) (8)
23 25 and 28 Sound the bugle with what might suggest taps, but don't do it consistently. (4,3,3,4)
24 One who shares a place in the sun with John Bull? (3,3)
25 and 28 See 23 across
29 Pompously mouthed. (7)
30 and 11 across Relative to a buck, you might make something out of it. (8)
31 Southey and his friends keep a lost cause for them. (4,5)

DOWN

1 Descriptive of the house of Boz. (5)
2 She fell for 16. (7)
3 Sort of treats the main point like a good tactician. (10)
4 Rover, perhaps, is fortunate to be so. (5,3)
5 and 17 down Certainly not the first technical manual, though it still might be a first edition. (6-4,4)
6 You can see through what it holds for the band. (4)
7 There might be no let-up here, though it makes a poor antonym. (7)
8 Not included in the lay of the land. (9)
14 Such an organization makes its voice heard. (5,5)
15 Box material may be one of the things in hand with directors. (9)
17 See 5 down
19 Change of speed on foot. (7)
21 Kept in firm environment. (2-5)
22 Musician who sounds somewhat of a crank. (6)
26 They're reputedly not waiters that come in and go out. (5)
27 Bulldozes animals? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1596

ACROSS: 1 Scabs; 11 Gastric; 12 and 4 Richard Wagner; 13 Twiddling; 14 Train; 15 Born Yesterday; 17 Assert oneself; 24 Run to seed; 25 Overrun; 26 Ladybug; 27 Duties; 28 Bride. DOWN: 2 Cassino; 3 Barn dance; 5 Ascot; 6 and 22 Niagara Falls; 7 Riding; 8 Agate; 9 Accident-prone; 10 Frighteningly; 16 Rush order; 18 Salient; 19 Lie-abed; 20 Afford; 21 Adage; 23 Serge.

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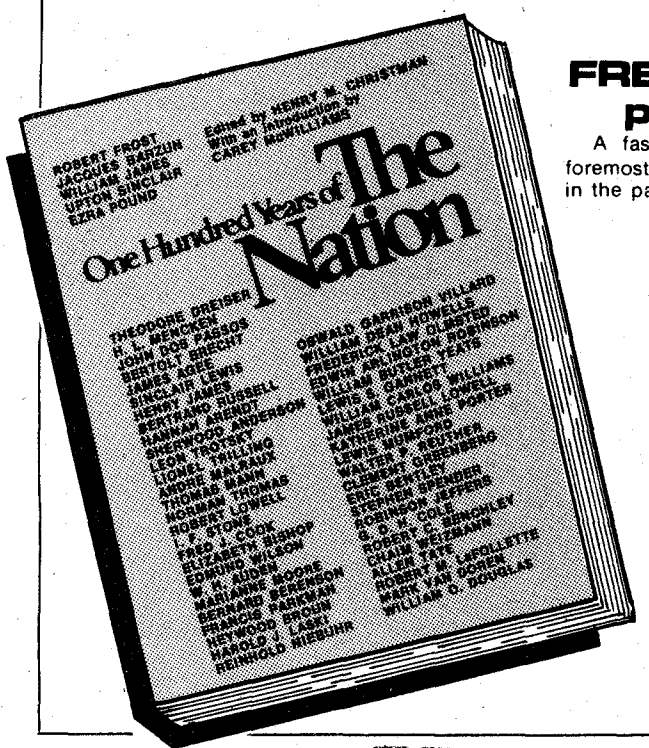

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